

PARADISE LIMESTONE
BACKYARD RENOVATIONS . PERTH WA

GUIDE 02

Limestone Walls & Pool Areas

Building retaining walls and pool surrounds that last on Perth sand

FREE GUIDE

GUIDE 02

Why walls matter here

Most Perth backyards are sand. Sand moves, and a slope that looks harmless will creep downhill every time it rains or the reticulation runs. A limestone wall holds that ground still, gives you a flat area you can actually use, and sets the shape of the whole yard.

This guide covers what we build, how we build it, and the parts you cannot see that decide whether a wall is still straight in twenty years. It should take about ten minutes to read.



A retaining wall doing two jobs at once: holding the level change and forming built-in bench seating.

Two kinds of wall

Nearly everything we build is one of these two. They look similar when finished, but what happens behind them is completely different.



Retaining wall

- Holds back soil and a change in level
- Needs footings, drainage and backfill
- Often needs council approval
- Can be stepped to terrace a slope



Freestanding wall

- Holds back nothing, both faces on show
- Privacy, screening and letterbox piers
- Simpler footing, no drainage behind
- Usually capped along the top

Natural or reconstituted

Both are limestone. Natural block is cut straight out of the ground, so every block is slightly different. Reconstituted block is made from crushed limestone in a mould, so it comes out even. Neither is better. It depends on the look you are after and the budget.



Natural limestone

- Honeycomb pitting, shell, real character
- Colour varies block to block
- Softer, weathers and rounds off
- Suits older homes and a rustic look



Reconstituted limestone

- Even colour and crisp square edges
- Predictable sizes, quicker to lay
- Harder wearing, holds its lines
- Suits newer homes and sharp modern jobs

Finishes that change the look

The block is only half of it. Capping, coping and the shape of the wall do as much for the finished result as the stone you pick.



Bullnose coping
Rounded front edge. Comfortable to sit on and grab.



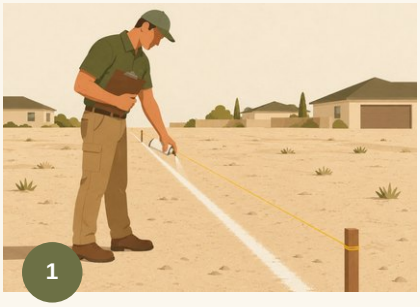
Curves
A curved wall softens a yard and draws the eye along it.



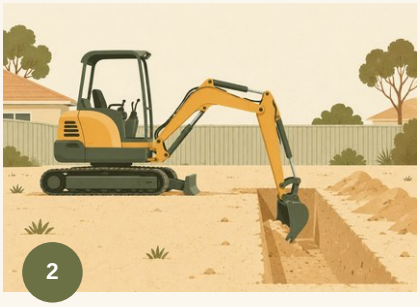
Steps and levels
Steps built into the wall tie the levels together.

How we build a wall that lasts

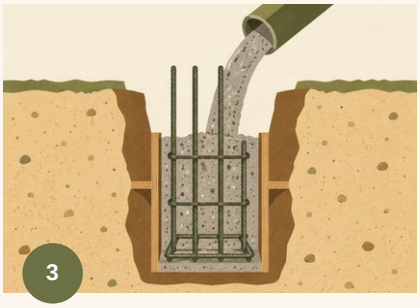
The finish is the easy part. What keeps a wall straight is the footing under it and the drainage behind it. Here is the order we work in on a typical job.



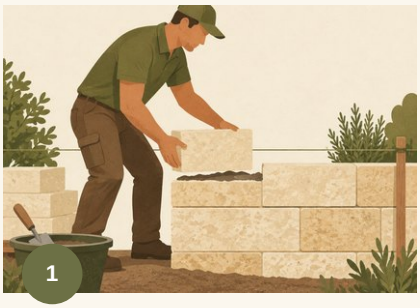
Mark out
We set the line, levels and heights on site so you can see exactly where it lands.



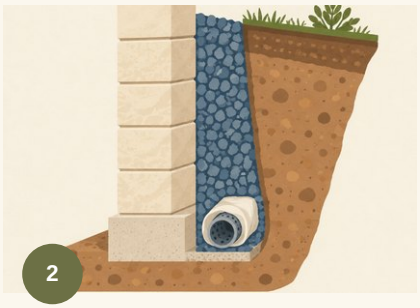
Excavate
We dig down to firm ground, not just to the level of the loose sand.



Footing
A steel reinforced concrete footing, sized to the wall height and the ground.



Lay the courses
Block laid to a string line, level and plumb, course by course.



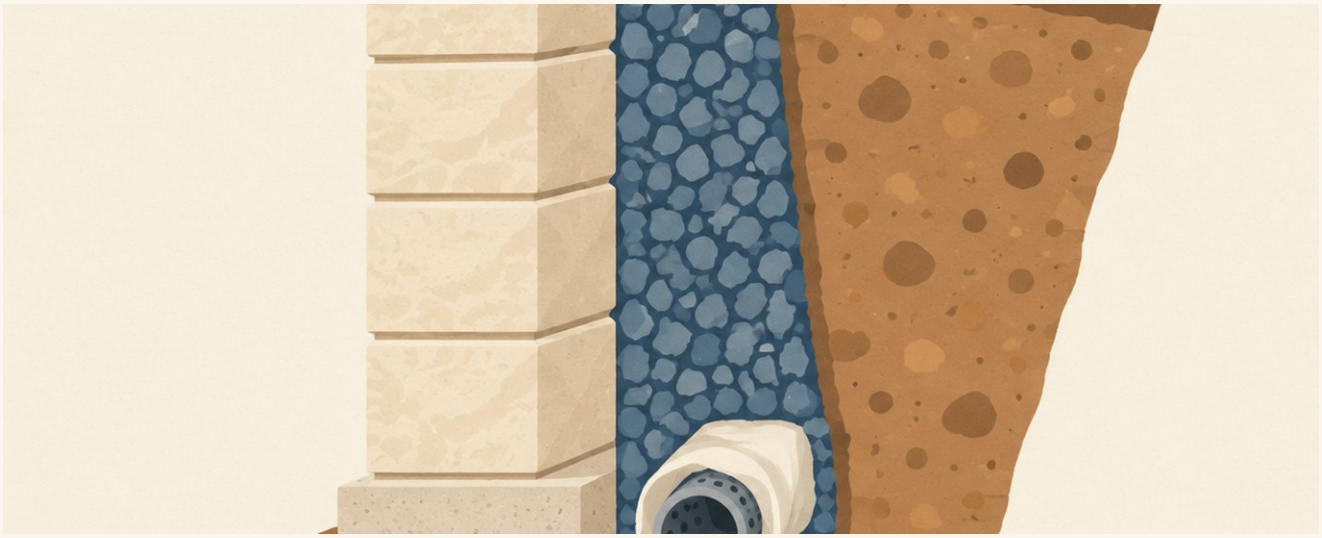
Drain and backfill
Ag pipe, blue metal and geotextile so water has somewhere to go.



Cap and clean up
Capping on top, joints finished, site left swept and tidy.

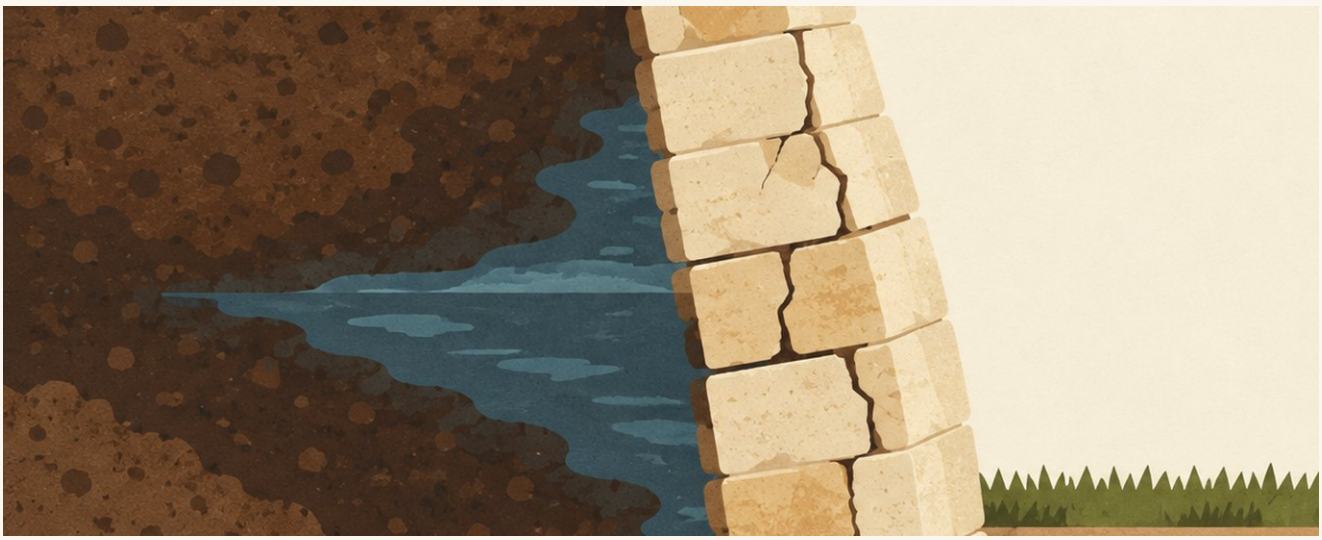
> **The bit nobody sees**
> Roughly half the cost of a retaining wall is under the ground or behind the face. That is the half that decides whether it lasts. If a quote looks unusually cheap, this is almost always where the difference is.

Drainage is what saves a wall



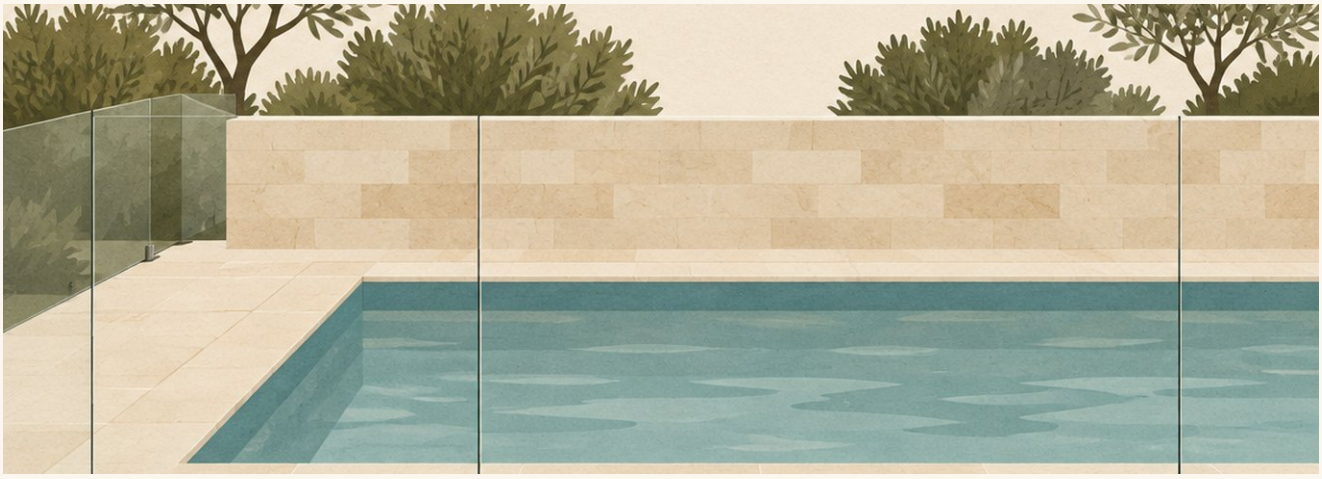
Behind a proper retaining wall: slotted ag pipe at the base, clean blue metal against the wall, and geotextile keeping sand out of the drainage.

Sand holds water better than people expect. With nowhere to escape, that water pushes on the back of the wall, and it pushes hard. Every wall we build gets drainage behind it and an outlet for the water to leave.



The same wall without drainage. Water builds up behind, the wall leans, the joints open and the blocks crack. This is the most common reason a wall fails.

Around the pool



A pool surround has to work as paving, as a wall, and as part of the safety barrier all at once.

- Coping is the edge you sit on and grab, so it gets a rounded bullnose front and a slip resistant finish.
- Everything falls away from the pool, never towards it, so splash-out and rain drain off rather than pooling.
- We keep walls and footings clear of the pool shell so nothing loads up against it.
- Pool barriers in WA must be at least 1.2 m high with nothing climbable nearby. Rules change, so confirm the detail with your local council before anything is built.
- Anything planted in the surround should be low litter, so you are not skimming leaves every morning.

Sealing and upkeep



Sealing a limestone wall. Worth doing near pools and in salt air, and worth repeating every few years.

- Sealing is optional on a garden wall and worth it around pools, where chlorine and salt sit on the stone.
- Hose salt spray and pool splash off now and then. It does more good than any product.
- Limestone is a soft stone. It marks and weathers and gains a bit of character. That is normal.
- Keep sprinklers off the wall face where you can. Constant wetting is what brings up staining.

What drives the price

We would rather explain what moves a quote than give you a number that changes the moment we see the site. These are the things that matter most.

- Height. Taller walls need bigger footings and engineering, and cost climbs faster than the height does.
- Access. If a bobcat can reach the work, it is quicker. If everything goes through a side gate by wheelbarrow, it is not.
- Ground. Clean sand digs easily. Limestone shelf, old fill or rubble takes longer.
- Length and corners. Straight runs are efficient. Curves, steps and returns take more setting out.
- Block choice and finish, including capping, rendering and sealing.

How long it takes

A straightforward garden wall is usually a few days on site. Pool surrounds and anything needing engineering or council approval take longer, and most of that time is paperwork rather than work in the ground. We give you the real timeframe up front, including the wait, and we tell you as soon as anything changes.

Mistakes we get called out to fix

- No drainage behind the wall. The most common one, and the most expensive to put right.
- A footing that sits in loose sand instead of firm ground.
- Backfilling with the same sand that was dug out, instead of clean drainage material.
- Building right up against the pool shell.
- Planting something with aggressive roots beside a new wall.
- Skipping approval on a wall that needed it, then finding out at sale time.

Questions worth asking any builder

You do not need to know the trade to get a straight answer. These five questions tell you most of what you need to know about a quote.

- What is going behind the wall for drainage, and where does that water come out?
- How deep is the footing, and what is it sitting on?
- Is this wall high enough to need engineering or council approval?
- What are you backfilling with?
- What is not included in this price?



Let's build your paradise

If you are weighing up a wall, the quickest way forward is for Aaron to walk the site with you. You get an honest quote, an honest timeframe and a straight answer on whether you need approval.

We work right across the Perth metro area, and the showroom in Fremantle is open by appointment if you would like to see and handle the stone first.

Talk to Aaron

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