

10 Things to Consider Before You Go Solar

Before you install solar panels on your roof, figure out how much energy you are using and see if you can reduce use. The more energy-efficient the home, the less solar you have to install.

If you have a solar garden in your community, it may be cheaper to buy in than to install your own rooftop solar. You, along with many others in your community, can invest in the solar garden and get a share of the energy output.

If rooftop is the way you want to go, be sure to fully understand the costs and risks of buying vs. leasing. For example, you may not be able to transfer leased rooftop solar panels when you sell your home, especially if the new owner doesn't want them.

Most solar systems operate automatically, and if you have enough rain, you don't have to worry about panel cleaning. Schedule an annual inspection to search for damage or wear to the panels and the surrounding infrastructure.

What if your rooftop solar produces more power than you use? You may be able to sell excess power back to your utility. Ask about your utility's net metering policies and rates.



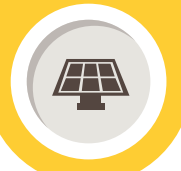
1 See if you can use less energy



2 Check out incentives



3 Community solar or rooftop?



4 Why community solar?



5 Buy or lease?



6 Follow the sun



7 Keep your panels clean



8 Talk to your utility



9 Learn what to do with excess power



10 Understand the savings

Check if your state offers tax credits or other incentives. Research any grants or loan/lease opportunities that make going solar even more affordable.

There are many variations of the community solar model but all are proven to be more cost-effective than your own solar. Costs are shared and the return is higher. Community solar can create jobs and make your community a better place to live and work.

Ask your rooftop solar vendor about the highest efficiency tilt for your solar panels or tracking arrays to help panels follow the sun as it moves. Remember, solar panels can be installed on your roof, on the ground, or integrated into your building.

No matter who you get solar power from, be sure to talk to your electric utility. You'll get the best advice on options and prices. Plus, you'll learn how you can still connect to the grid for power when the sun isn't shining.

Look at your electricity bill now. Calculate how much you are likely to save cost by producing your own solar power. Your utility can help — just call them.



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