



How To Find The Right Solar Contractor For You

Helpful questions to ask along with advice on evaluating the answers.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT CONTRACTOR

How to find the right solar contractor for you:

The choice you make for home solar products and installation is something you get to (or have to) live with for decades. Many solar installation companies out there offer low-priced solar products and installations. But the old adage you get what you pay for couldn't be truer than when it comes to solar products— and installation partners. This guide will help you choose the right solar installation company. One that can customize a solar system to match your needs, with high-quality solar products, and payment options that meet your budget. When you meet with solar companies, here are some questions to ask with advice on evaluating the answers.

QUICK TIP

Local installers are likely more familiar with local building and electrical codes.



PV Installation
Professional



What types of licenses, credentials, and certifications do they hold?

Any solar company worth working with will be fully licensed and bonded. This is easy to track down. Bonus points if the company is certified by The North American Board of Certified Energy Practitioners (NABCEP) which has a PV Installation Professional certification program that holds industry professionals to the highest standards. It's also a big plus if the company is OSHA certified. This means they are safety and health compliant. Finally any energy consultant you speak with should possess their Home Improvement Sales (H.I.S) certifications as well.

This grants them access to sell home improvement systems to you - the homeowner and that they have been properly trained in the trade they are discussing with you. All these factors mean your potential solar company has the ability to provide well rounded service for your installation.

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Are They Maximizing Your Savings?

All solar companies should provide you with a detailed proposal that includes how much you can expect to save on energy with the solar system they're suggesting. This information comes from analyzing your energy use for the last year and the size of installation, while factoring in available federal and local incentives.

All of these factors contribute to the projections for your near and longer-term savings potential with solar. To ensure you are getting the accurate estimates, be sure to ask potential solar partners to explain how much you'll save with your solar system in 5, 10 and 20 years down the line. This is important because your savings can vary depending on which type of financing option you choose.

Do You Have Options?

How you'll pay for your solar system should be as custom-fit as your system. Reputable solar companies will offer several options for payment, including cash purchases, loans and leasing. Loans are becoming a very popular way to pay for a solar system, with options to finance for up to 20 years and highly competitive interest rates.

There are \$0-down options for leasing and loans, which many people find beneficial to minimize the immediate impact that solar has on their budgets. Depending on what financial institution you work with, there are also options to add solar to a home mortgage, refinancing or other financial products for home improvement.

Cash Purchase

Take advantage of the 30% Federal Tax Credit, and gain all the benefits of solar as soon as your system is turned on.

You purchase a solar panel system outright and can begin installation as soon as you're ready. If you have the tax appetite to absorb tax credits and the available capital you may find a direct purchase via cash or loan to be the best option.

Solar Loan

With zero-down options available and low fixed rates your loan payment is usually less than your current monthly electric bills. Just like a cash purchase, a loan offers complete access to the 30% Federal Tax Credit.

If you can afford your current electricity bill, you can afford a loan to purchase a solar electric system and benefit from immediate monthly savings.

Leasing

A lease allows you to get all the power your panels generate plus the benefit of free repairs and monitoring of rate life of the equipment.

With fixed lease payments averaging less than your current utility charges, you benefit immediately. Leases also provide increased savings over time as traditional energy costs rise.

At the end of the lease you can purchase the system at a reduced cost, get the system removed, or renew the lease.

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What warranties are included with your system?

At first glance, some warranties may appear the same, but it's important to read the fine print. For starters, if you expect your system to last 25 years (which you should) then the warranty should last that long, too. You also want a warranty that covers your entire system—not just the panels. And it's beneficial if all your equipment is under warranty from the same company. If a solar system is built with components and technology from different manufacturers, it can be challenging to isolate who is responsible, and therefore, who will provide compensation if something goes wrong.

AirSun Solar provides SunPower panels which offer a Complete Confidence Warranty, the only warranty to cover your entire system. There is no need for receipts, proof of purchase or written claims. The warranty provides full coverage for quality of product and solar power produced. Plus, if you experience issues with your system within 25 years (10 years for monitoring hardware and software). Warranty covers repair, replacement and reimbursement.

What's the efficiency, durability and performance of your panels?

Panels with high efficiency, durability, and performance ratings are going to generate the most energy for the longest amount of time. Panels that come out on top for all of these ratings are not the least expensive in terms of upfront costs; however, when you calculate the total lifetime value of these solar panels, you will quickly see why the investment is well worth it. The higher the efficiency rating, the better the panel is at producing energy, resulting in more electricity generated to offset your utility bill and more savings in your wallet.

Durability ratings quantify how well a panel will hold up over time. The higher the durability ratings, the longer the solar panel is going to last. Performance refers to how much energy the panel is producing, from day one throughout its lifespan. Every solar panel produces less energy over time, but not at the same rate. Some panels degrade quickly, producing far less energy at year 10 than year one. Other panels degrade more slowly, maintaining high performance rates throughout their entire lifespan—25 years or longer.

QUICK TIP

If a solar system is built with parts from different manufacturers, it can be hard to isolate who is responsible if something goes wrong.

Make sure your solar contractor reviews the efficiency, durability and performance of the equipment they are showing you. At the end of the day, solar panels last a long time, so make sure you are getting the greatest return on your investment.

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What do others think?

This is a great way to verify what other people just like you think about your potential contractor, the products, the service and the experience as a whole. Bigger isn't always better when choosing a solar company to install your solar system.

At AirSun Solar, we always encourage our customers to give feedback as we are always looking for ways to maximize customer satisfaction and learn where we can improve.

Are they in it for the long haul?

It's important to choose a company that offers ongoing solar maintenance solutions and preventative care to maximize your savings. While solar is low maintenance, in order to keep it performing at optimal levels it may require additional services. It's beneficial to work with a contractor who also provides services such as panel cleanings, inverter replacements, etc., because they are familiar with your system and can help determine the best course of action to maintain your system and manufacturers warranties.

Do they subcontract out any of their work?

This is important to verify because you'll want a company that can control their installation standards and deliver on their promise from start to finish. This also helps to assure that your concerns don't get passed to a different company if something goes wrong. At AirSun Solar everything is provided in house.

You have the assurance of knowing our team understands your system and you always have single resource to turn towards.

Is The System Built For You?

To save costs, some companies have template designs and might not be able to customize a solar system specifically for your home. Look for a company who works with the specifics of your home and roof— what direction it faces, what it's made of and if it's shaded. A solar system designed for your roof's conditions will maximize your system's performance, and that's exactly what you want.

Another factor to consider is your future energy usage. Are you planning on buying an electric vehicle or installing a pool or spa and are looking to offset that additional usage as well? A trained energy consultant will take all these factors into consideration when designing your system for your home and your lifestyle.