



You Decided You Want to Go Solar. Now What?

Really the first step of going solar is research – understanding what solar is and what it can, and perhaps cannot, do. Since you are reading this paper, you may already be at the research stage and what concerns you is the obvious next step of filling out a form or making a call and ultimately having a solar company contact you.

Speaking to a sales person can be intimidating but if you understand the solar process, it may be easier to put your name on that form or pick up the phone and call.

Below are 10 steps involved in going solar. Most installers will follow these steps however the definition and order of each step may vary slightly. Whoever you may work with, this is what you can generally expect as you move toward powering your property with solar.

The 10 Steps to Going Solar



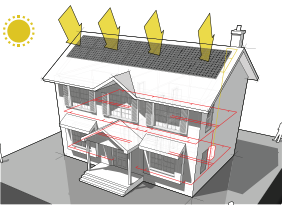
1. Consultation

Initially, you will be asked to not only provide contact information but also information on your property and your electricity rates. This allows for an initial assessment of your property. Using online satellite imagery, a trained solar expert can determine if the property is sited ideally, if there are shading issues and can get an idea of the approximate space available for panels. Your electricity rate information will also be needed as it helps determine whether solar can indeed save you money.



2. Assessment

Only so much can be learned remotely, so if it appears your property is a potential candidate for solar, it may be time for an in-person meeting. A solar expert may come to your home and confirm what was gleaned online but may also get a better idea of the condition of the roof and whether there may be any other issues in installing panels. The representative will ask many questions to better understand your goals and budget and maybe more importantly, the solar expert can also answer the many questions you may have.



3. Proposal

At this point, your installer will begin to put together a design for a solar system to fit your property. The design will indicate the number and type of panels and other equipment. The design will be the primary component of your proposal. This is when you will finally have a concrete idea of cost and potential savings for a customized system for your property. If external financing is needed, you may also begin discussions with that company.



4. Contract

Up until now, you are essentially under no obligation to move forward with the installer or even with any solar system. However, once you have a proposal that meets your needs, the next step would normally be putting in place an agreement that obligates the installer to install the solar system in the proposal and for you to meet financial or other obligations of the proposal.



5. Scheduling

Based upon the weather, your goals, permit requirements, the availability of equipment and other obligations of your installer, an initial schedule can be created for your project. Some elements of the project, such as permitting and interconnection of your solar system to the grid, depend upon outside entities, but your installer should have a good idea how long these steps will take and include that in the overall schedule.



6. Permits

Like any building projects, a solar system must comply with any local building codes. The property owner will most likely not need to do anything, but your installer will be busy preparing and submitting the proper paperwork to your municipality. This may take some time, but once complete, the exact date of your install can be scheduled.



7. Installation

With the paperwork complete, your installer will coordinate with you to determine a schedule for delivering equipment and doing the installation work. If any additional work needs to take place prior to the install, such as tree removal or re-sealing or installing a new roof, that will be coordinated to be completed before the actual solar work begins. The solar installers will need access to the property and the breaker boxes so we ask that someone be present on the days of your installation. However, most residential systems can be installed in one to two days, with larger commercial systems perhaps taking longer.



8. Inspection

There are a number of inspections that may be needed after the installation of the system. Local municipalities may require building inspectors to review the installation. The utility will also make sure the system complies with its standards. These often occur within a week of installation.



9. Interconnection and System Activation

Interconnection is essentially connecting your solar system to the grid. Your installer will have applied to your utility for this, and, depending on where you are located, it may take some time to be completed. However, once completed, and all inspections are completed, your system is ready for activation. After the inspection by the utility, you will be granted Permission to Operate (PTO). While your panels have been absorbing solar energy since they were first put on the roof, once you receive your PTO, your system can be activated allowing the power to start flowing to your home (and to the grid). At this point, you are fully enjoying the benefits of going solar.



10. Solar Satisfaction

With solar power flowing to your house, you can delight in the money you are saving. Many new solar homeowners love sunny days as they can literally see their meter turning backwards. Many solar homeowners become evangelists for solar power telling their friends and families about their solar systems and encouraging them to also go solar. Many installers, like Ross Solar, will actually pay customers for any new customers their existing customers bring them. These referral programs are just another way that solar can help you save money.

If you are in New York, Massachusetts or Connecticut and want more information on how solar works, and how solar can work for you, contact:



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