

Questions to Ask a Solar Installer

1. Are you licensed, bonded and insured?

It's critical that the solar installation company you hire has received a license from the county/city and state in which they are working. The contractor should be insured and bonded, as well.

2. How long have you been in business?

3. How many solar systems have you installed?

While more is not necessarily better, this will give you some idea of experience

4. Can they provide you with customer reviews & testimonials, references and other examples of their installations?

5. What is their rating with the Better Business Bureau?

6. Who will be working on your home?

Will it be a contractor with the solar company, or do they subcontract the work? If a subcontractor will be handling your job, you'll need to do the extra legwork to make sure that they're licensed, insured, and experienced, too.

7. Will there be a master electrician on site when the system is installed?

There should be.

8. Is my roof right for home solar power? The physical condition, structural integrity and roofing material?

Not only will the solar contractor have to make a recommendation for your system size, they will also need to physically inspect your roof. After all, it needs to be suited to have solar panels safely installed. Depending on your roof's overall condition and age, you might have to replace it prior to installing your solar system. It is also important to keep in mind that when the contractor installs racks on your roof (to support the panels), they will be drilling holes. Make sure you ask what type of materials and equipment will be used to ensure you won't have a leaky roof when it rains.

9. What happens if my home solar system doesn't perform as promised?

If the contractor promises that your system will produce a specific amount of energy each year, be sure to ask what will happen if the system or panel efficiency doesn't meet your expectations. There are several possible scenarios. For instance, maybe the company will add extra panels, free of charge. Or perhaps they'll reimburse you for your system's underperformance.

10. Who takes care of solar building permits and inspections?

As with any construction type project certain permits and inspections are required. Does the solar contractor take care of all of these including fees and scheduling?

11. How is solar going to impact my utility bill?

You will always have an electric bill but your install should be able to tell you how much you could expect your bill to go down. Remember solar savings really should be thought about as annually and not monthly.

12. What is the warrant of my home solar panels?

[Solar systems come with both warranties](#) and production quality guarantees. Note that these are not the same as the workmanship warranty that a contractor offers. Therefore, it's a good idea to ask about both of these types of warranties, as well as what each covers.

13. If your roof needs repairs in the future, what is the process for removing and replacing the solar panels?

14. How will I know my system is working?

How is your system monitored and do you receive efficiency reports? This could be important information over the life of your system.

15. How are rebates and incentives handled?

If there are rebates or tax incentives available, are you responsible for securing any of these rebates or are they completely handled by your new solar power partner.

16. What additional cost may incur over the lifespan of my home solar panels?

Solar power panels carry an average warranty period of 20 years. Ask what if any maintenance costs you might expect, and who is responsible, over the lifetime of your solar power contract. Additional Costs are going to vary depending on whether you lease or purchase a home solar system.

17. What is the process for grid tying solar with the utility and how long does that take?

Almost all solar has to be grid tied to function. This will require your solar company to work with the utility. This process could include applications, fees, inspections, meter exchanges and can take several weeks or months to complete.

18. What system size should I choose for the most savings?

Note that sizing a solar system is much more complex than simply taking a look at your electric bills and picking one that will produce enough electricity to match your usage. The solar company rep first needs to collect the following information: Your home energy usage patterns, the orientation and angle of your roof, the surplus amount of energy you'll export to the grid. This data is necessary when it comes to first determining the ideal system size for your home, and then creating a financial forecast based on that.

19. Will a lien be placed on my home if I lease or take out a loan for this solar?

A lien could make it difficult if you were to ever decide to sell your home.

20. What will happen if I decide to relocate while leasing a solar system?

Generally, you can transfer a lease to a new homeowner but what happens if they don't qualify and is there a fee associated with transferring a lease.

21. Is there an insurance policy that comes with the system or do you need to take out additional homeowner insurance?