



Solar grid for home

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Learn how to assess your home's solar potential, options, and needs for going solar. Find resources, tools, and tips for choosing and installing a solar system that suit...

Interested in understanding the impact solar can have on your home? Enter some basic information below, and we'll instantly provide a free estimate of your energy savings.

Buying a solar panel system means buying a lot of equipment the average person doesn't have reason to know about. In the most basic terms, photons from the sun are absorbed by the solar panels and converted into direct current, or DC, electricity. For this energy to be used in American homes, it has to go through an inverter attached to the solar array to become alternating current, or AC, electricity.

Fortunately for the solar-curious, many options exist for homeowners and even renters to get some or most of their electricity needs met with energy from the sun.

Finally, both homeowners and renters in many places have access to community solar. This option allows people to opt in to a nearby solar farm to enjoy some energy savings.

The costs of solar panels will depend on a few factors, including where you live, how much of your energy needs you want the system to cover, whether you install it yourself and whether you want a battery (which could cost as much as the system itself). The average cost was about \$3 per watt in 2022 for an 8 kW system through an installer, according to the consulting firm Wood Mackenzie.

The way you pay for your system is vital. You'll notice the biggest hit to your bank balance by paying for solar outright, while financing will spread the expense out over years but with added interest. A lease or PPA is most friendly to the budget-minded, but you won't enjoy the long-term benefits that come with owning a system outright.

Here's the average total cash price, cost per watt and system size for a solar panel system in your state, according to data from FindEnergy . These prices don't factor in tax credits or state incentives. Certain states don't have any FindEnergy solar data and are grayed out on the map.

To get a better idea of when to expect a return on investment, look at how much energy you've consumed in the past year or two and how much it cost you. Then, working with an installer, figure out how much of your energy you'd like to offset with solar and how much the system will cost. Eventually, the savings from not having to buy electricity from your utility will be greater than the cost of the solar system itself.



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“In terms of payback, broadly seven to 12 years is a decent average when you see returns from investment in solar after purchasing a system,” Delman said.

It is possible to install most of a solar panel system yourself – mounting the panels on your roof and connecting them to each other. But if your home is connected to a grid, you’ll need to hire a licensed electrician for the final connection needed to feed electricity to your utility.

“Another thing to keep in mind if you’re doing it yourself is whether the warranties for the panels that you purchase require them to be installed by a professional,” Delman said. “Often when people do it themselves, they’ll hire an electrician to do the finishing work so it can get certified. It’s also good if you’re not an expert to have somebody with expertise to just go over the wiring and make sure that everything is where it should be.”

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