



# Guide to Getting the Best Solar Estimate

You may have heard, Home Solar Systems are being installed on homes all over the country. You've probably seen news reports about people saving on their electric bills. With all the excitement and demand for solar energy the number of solar providers has increased dramatically. Before choosing a solar provider you want to interview potential providers, receive an on-site assessment and get a detailed solar system estimate. Like other major home services, an on-site visit and detailed estimate is the safest way to ensure you choose the best provider!

With this solar provider questionnaire and estimate checklist, you will make the most informed solar energy system purchase.

## Collect the Following Information before Your On-Site Assessment

1. Average monthly electric bill for the last 12 months.
2. Current Monthly Electric Bill.
3. Get state and federal incentives for your area from the following web site <http://www.dsireusa.org/>
4. Download and read the consumer guide to Solar Energy from the Department Of Energy. <http://www.nrel.gov/docs/fy04osti/35297.pdf>

Ask About the Company	Notes
<input type="radio"/> How many solar installations have you completed in my area?	
<input type="radio"/> How long has your company been in business?	
<input type="radio"/> Do you have a list of addresses of homes where you have installed solar panels in my area? 1. 2. 3.	
<input type="radio"/> Are your installers nationally certified to install solar panels?  Ensure they are certified through the following organizations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• REC – Interstate Renewable Energy Council <a href="http://www.irecusa.org">http://www.irecusa.org</a></li><li>• NABCEP – North American Board of Certified Energy Practitioners <a href="http://www.nabcep.org/">http://www.nabcep.org/</a></li></ul>	

Ask the Following Questions About The Solar Providers Estimate	Notes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ As part of my quote will you be inspecting my roof to determine if it can hold the weight of the solar panels and if my roof may be damaged by installation?</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Will you explain net metering and how you work with my local utility company?</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ As part of your quote I will need a list of all incentives available in my area with the exact process of who should apply for the incentive and when?</li> <li>○ If I am responsible for applying for an incentive I will need instructions on how and when to apply for these incentives included in my estimate. (City, State, Fed, Tax)</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ I will need a list of the components of the solar system you are proposing, along with the manufacturer and model numbers for each component.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Can I monitor the output of my solar panels and what do I do if they are not performing.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ I will need full written warranty details for my solar system. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. What happens if my solar panels are damaged by wind, rain?</li> <li>b. What happens if my solar panels stop functioning properly?</li> <li>c. What happens if my solar panels are damaged by a baseball hit by the neighbors next door?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ I will need in writing the expected maintenance schedule and/or costs for the solar panels you are proposing for my house? If the manufacturer suggests maintenance that requires additional costs over the life of my solar system I will need this in writing as well.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ I will need a written performance guarantee! Stating that the solar panels will produce the amount of energy you are proposing in your estimate and any remedies if performance is less than expected.</li> </ul>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ I will need the installation process for my solar panels outlined in writing as part of your estimate! <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Installation steps with estimated dates and times.</li> <li>b. What times of the day etc.</li> <li>c. What do you need from me during installation? Access to inside the house, power shut off etc.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ I will need a list of required permits and paperwork required to install my solar system and who will be required to get the permits.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ What happens when I sell my home?</li> <li>○ Solar Leasing – I will need written guarantees and detailed instructions of how the solar system lease is transferred to a new home owner upon me selling my home.</li> </ul>	

### Additional Items that need to be included in a solar panel bid

- Total Cost including design through installation
  - Labor
  - Equipment
  - Any other costs or potential costs
- Costs Separated by Upfront and Ongoing including maintenance
- Annual and lifetime Cost Savings
- Complete financing and payment details including Power Purchase Agreements with local utility.