



An Extended Guide · No. 1501

Choosing a Solar Installer

How to pick someone you
can trust on your roof

Tech Made Simple — Service Made Personal

BillsHomeTech.com · (330) 200-8042 · Atwater, Ohio

Free & printable — share it with someone who needs it



Book a visit —
billshometech.com/book

! Read this first — two honest truths about home solar

Two honest truths before we start, because they surprise a lot of good folks. First, home solar is a professional job — it takes a licensed installer, building permits, and your utility's approval to connect (called interconnection). This guide is here to help you understand, plan for, and live with solar; it is not a do-it-yourself project, and I never want you climbing on a roof or opening an electrical panel. Second, a plain grid-tied solar system — one without a battery — shuts itself off during a power outage, even in bright sunshine. That is a required safety feature, so the system cannot put electricity onto the lines while the crews are repairing them. If keeping the lights on during an outage matters to you, you will need a battery, and we will talk about that plainly. Because it's a professional install, the company you choose matters every bit as much as the panels — maybe more.

Choosing someone you can trust on your roof

Panels are made by big factories, but your system is installed by the local company you hire. Who that is — how careful, honest, and long-lasting they are — shapes your whole experience. This guide helps you choose well.

I'm Bill, of Bill's Home Tech in Portage County. I don't install solar and I don't take referral fees, so I've no dog in this fight — just a wish to see you treated fairly. Think of me as a friend helping you vet the folks bidding for your business.

Solar sales can get pushy, and the stakes are high, so we'll go slow. By the end you'll know the green flags to look for, the red flags to run from, and the questions that quickly separate the good from the glossy.

★ Bring me the bids and I'll help you weigh them

Got proposals from a few companies and not sure who to trust? That's a perfect thing to bring me. I'll help you compare them honestly, with nothing to sell and no one to favor. Call or text (330) 200-8042.

Choosing an installer, on one page

The whole approach in a handful of points.

- ❑ Hire someone properly licensed and insured for this work in Ohio.
- ❑ Favor a local company with a real track record and references.
- ❑ Look for solid credentials, such as NABCEP-certified staff.
- ❑ Get two or three quotes and compare them apples to apples.
- ❑ Make sure they handle permits, the utility, and warranty claims.
- ❑ Never sign under pressure — walk from 'today only' and 'free solar.'

✓ The best defense is comparison

Almost every pushy tactic loses its power when you've got two other quotes on the table. Comparing a few honest bids is the single best thing you can do to protect yourself.

Why the installer matters as much as the gear

It's tempting to focus on which panels you'll get. But the quality of the installation, and who stands behind it, matters just as much.

Good panels installed poorly can leak, underperform, or fail early. Ordinary panels installed well can serve beautifully for decades. The workmanship — how carefully the roof is sealed, the wiring done, the system commissioned — is largely invisible to you, which is exactly why the installer's integrity matters so much.

And solar is a long relationship. You may need them for a warranty claim, a service call, or advice years from now. Choosing a company likely to still be around, and to treat you right, is choosing peace of mind.

✓ You're hiring a partner, not just buying panels

Think of it less as a purchase and more as picking a contractor you'll deal with for years. That mindset naturally steers you toward reliability over the flashiest sales pitch.

Licensing and insurance first

Before anything else, confirm the basics: that the company is properly licensed and carries insurance. This is non-negotiable.

Solar involves electrical work, which in Ohio must be done by appropriately licensed professionals. The company should also carry liability insurance and workers' compensation, so that if something goes wrong — damage to your home, or an injury on your property — you're not left holding the bag.

Don't be shy about asking to see proof. A reputable installer expects the question and answers it readily. Hesitation or vague reassurance here is a serious warning sign.

! Uninsured work can land on you

If an uninsured crew damages your home or someone is hurt, you could be the one left paying. Confirming license and insurance isn't rude — it's basic self-protection, and any honest company welcomes it.

Credentials worth looking for

Beyond the basics, certain credentials signal a company that takes its craft seriously.

The most respected in the trade is NABCEP — the North American Board of Certified Energy Practitioners. A NABCEP-certified installer has met a recognized standard of training and experience. It's not the only mark of quality, but it's a strong, real one worth asking about.

Ask whether the people actually doing your install hold such credentials, not just someone in the office. Manufacturer certifications can matter too, since some panel and battery makers only honor full warranties when their approved installers do the work.

✓ **Ask: 'Who on your team is certified, and in what?'**

A confident answer naming real credentials — like NABCEP — is reassuring. Manufacturer 'certified installer' status can also protect your warranties, so it's worth confirming for your specific equipment.

A local track record and staying power

A warranty is only as good as the company behind it. So how long they've been around, and whether they're local, really matters.

A company that's operated in your area for years, with a real address and a history of installs nearby, is more likely to still be there when you need a service call or a warranty honored. Fly-by-night outfits and far-away sales operations are a bigger gamble.

Local also means they know your townships' permit rules, your utilities' interconnection processes, and our Ohio weather. That local fluency smooths the whole project and is hard for an out-of-town company to match.

✓ Roots in the community are a good sign

An installer with deep local roots has a reputation to protect and neighbors who'll talk. That accountability tends to make for careful work and honest dealing.

References and reviews

Nothing tells you more about an installer than the experiences of folks they've already served.

Ask for references — ideally recent local customers — and actually call a couple. Ask how the process went, whether the work was tidy, whether the system performs as promised, and how the company handled any problems. Real customers are usually happy to share.

Read online reviews too, but weigh them sensibly: look for patterns rather than any single glowing or angry post, and notice especially how the company responds to complaints. A thoughtful response to a problem tells you a lot.

✓ Ask references the question that matters most

'If something went wrong, how did they handle it?' Any company can do a smooth job when all goes well. How they behave when there's a hiccup is the real measure — and past customers will tell you.

Two kinds of homes, two sets of needs

Finding a good installer can look a little different depending on whether you're in a busy suburb or out in the country.

If you live in town or the suburbs

In town or the suburbs, you'll likely have several installers to choose from, which makes comparing quotes easy — but also means more sales attention, including door-knockers.

- Plenty of options makes getting three quotes straightforward.
- Expect more sales outreach; be ready to say 'I'm comparing, not signing.'
- Local reviews from nearby neighbors are easy to find and relevant.
- Confirm they know your city's permit office and your utility.

If you are out in the country on a well

Out in the country, there may be fewer installers nearby, and some will travel to reach you. Familiarity with rural setups — co-ops, ground mounts, well pumps — becomes especially valuable.

- Fewer local options may mean widening your search a bit — still get several quotes.
- Ask about travel: who comes back for service, and how far away are they?
- Favor installers who know rural co-ops and ground-mount permitting.
- If backing up a well pump, choose someone experienced with that.

★ Short on local options?

If you're rural and struggling to find installers or judge the ones who'll travel to you, let me help you sort the serious from the questionable. Call (330) 200-8042.

Always get more than one quote

If you take just one habit from this guide, make it this one. It protects you more than any single tip.

Gather proposals from two or three installers before deciding. It shows you the range of prices and approaches, reveals who's being honest about your roof and savings, and — crucially — takes the pressure off, because you're never stuck with a single take-it-or-leave-it offer.

Comparing quotes does take a little patience, but it's the surest path to a fair deal and a good installer. Anyone who tries to talk you out of getting other bids is telling you exactly why you should.

! 'Don't bother getting other quotes' is a red flag

A confident, honest installer expects you to compare and isn't threatened by it. If someone pressures you to skip other bids or sign before you can shop around, that alone is reason to look elsewhere.

Who handles the permits, utility, and warranties?

A full-service installer manages the whole journey and stands behind it afterward. Pin this down before you sign.

- **Permits:** do they file all the building and electrical permits for you?
- **Interconnection:** do they handle the utility application and net metering?
- **Warranty claims:** if a panel or inverter fails, who processes the claim — them, or you alone?
- **Service calls:** who comes out if something needs attention years from now?
- **Subcontractors:** do their own crews do the work, or is it farmed out?

✓ You want one throat to choke, kindly speaking

The simplest arrangement is one company responsible for it all — design, permits, install, and standing behind the warranties. That way, if anything ever needs fixing, there's no finger-pointing about whose job it is.

In-house crews or subcontractors?

Some installers do everything with their own people; others hire subcontractors for parts of the job. Neither is automatically bad, but it's worth understanding.

An in-house crew usually means more consistent quality and clearer accountability. Subcontracting isn't necessarily a problem — many fine companies use trusted trades for specific tasks — but you'll want to know who's actually on your roof and who's responsible if their work has an issue.

Ask plainly: will your own employees do the install, or a subcontractor? And either way, who honors the workmanship warranty? Clear answers here prevent confusion later.

✓ Ask who is responsible if subcontracted work fails

If a sub does part of the job, you want the company you hired — not some third party — to own any problems. Confirm that the installer stands behind all the work, whoever performed it.

The workmanship warranty

Panels and inverters carry their own manufacturer warranties. The installer's own workmanship warranty is separate — and just as important.

A workmanship (or labor) warranty covers the installer's work itself: the mounting, the sealing, the wiring. If a roof penetration ever leaks or a connection fails because of how it was installed, this is what covers the fix. Ask how long it lasts and exactly what it includes.

A generous workmanship warranty from a company likely to stick around is worth a great deal. A short one, or one from an outfit that may not last, is worth much less — however good the panel warranty sounds.

✓ Match the warranty to the company's staying power

A long warranty only helps if the company survives to honor it. Weigh the warranty's length together with how established and local the installer is. The two go hand in hand.

High-pressure and door-to-door sales

Solar has attracted some aggressive selling. Recognizing the tactics is half the battle.

Be wary of door-to-door salespeople, 'today only' discounts, countdown pressure, and pitches that keep you talking for hours until you're worn down. None of these are how a trustworthy company earns a decades-long investment. Real value doesn't evaporate if you sleep on it.

You are always allowed to say, 'I'm gathering information and comparing quotes; I won't be signing today.' A good salesperson respects that. One who won't take it for an answer is showing you who they are.

! If you feel rushed, that's the signal to stop

Pressure is the tactic; your discomfort is the tell. The moment you feel hurried or cornered, it's perfectly fine to end the conversation and step back. A fair deal will still be there tomorrow.

'Free solar' and sky-high savings claims

Two pitches deserve special caution, because they mislead so many good people.

'Free solar' almost always means a company will own the panels on your roof and sell you the power, or sign you to a long financing deal — not that anything is truly free. That arrangement can be reasonable, but you must understand it. Our paying-for-solar guide breaks it down.

Be equally wary of guaranteed savings numbers or promises to 'eliminate your electric bill.' Honest estimates come with ranges and assumptions, and most solar homes still have some bill. Anyone dealing in guarantees and absolutes is overselling.

! Read every word before you sign a 'free' deal

If a pitch sounds free or too good, that's precisely when to slow down and read the fine print — or have someone you trust read it. The catch is usually in who owns the system and what you're committing to for years.

Questions that reveal a good installer

A few well-aimed questions quickly show whether you're dealing with a pro or a pitch.

- Can you show me your license, insurance, and certifications?
- How long have you worked in this area, and can I call recent references?
- Will your own crew do the work, and who honors the workmanship warranty?
- Do you handle all permits and the utility interconnection?
- Can you show me the sun-and-shade analysis behind your production estimate?

✓ Watch how they answer, not just what they say

Patience, specifics, and a willingness to put things in writing are the marks of a good installer. Irritation at fair questions, or slippery non-answers, tell you to keep looking.

What must be in the contract

When you choose a company, everything that matters should be captured in writing before you sign.

- The exact system — panels, inverter, battery — and where it goes.
- The total price and the payment terms, in plain numbers.
- All warranties — equipment and workmanship — with lengths and terms.
- Who handles permits, the utility interconnection, and inspections.
- The expected timeline and what happens if it changes.
- Any production estimate, with its assumptions stated.

! Verbal promises don't count

If a salesperson promised something — a savings figure, a warranty detail, a timeline — make sure it's written in the contract. If it's not on paper, assume it won't happen, and ask for it before you sign.

Green flags and red flags

A quick side-by-side of what to seek and what to shun.

Area	Green flag	Red flag
Sales style	Patient, no rush	'Sign today'
Credentials	Licensed, NABCEP	Vague or none
Local record	Years nearby	Far-off, new
Quotes	Welcomes comparison	'Don't shop'
Warranty	Clear, in writing	Spoken only

You won't find a company that's perfect on every line, but the overall pattern speaks clearly. Lean toward the left column, and treat a cluster of right-column behaviors as your cue to walk away.

Comparing quotes apples to apples

Two quotes can look far apart until you line up what's actually in each. Comparing fairly takes a little care.

Make sure each proposal is for a similar system size and quality, with comparable warranties and the same scope — permits, interconnection, and so on all included. A cheaper quote that leaves out permits, uses a shorter warranty, or quietly assumes rosier savings isn't really cheaper.

Look past the headline price to the whole package: the equipment, the warranties, the workmanship, the company's staying power, and how the production estimate was reached. The best value is rarely just the lowest number.

★ Let me line them up with you

Comparing solar quotes fairly is fiddly, and that's exactly the kind of thing I enjoy helping with. Bring me your bids and I'll help you see what's really being offered. Call (330) 200-8042.

Trust your gut, and take your time

For all the checklists, your own good sense is a powerful tool. Don't override it.

If a company makes you feel rushed, talked down to, or uneasy, that matters, even if you can't put your finger on why. You're inviting these folks onto your roof and into a years-long relationship. It's fine to choose the one who simply treats you with patience and respect.

There is no prize for deciding fast. Take the time to gather quotes, check references, sleep on it, and ask a trusted friend or me. The right installer will still be glad to have your business next week.

✓ Respect is part of the product

How a company treats you before you've paid a dime is the best preview of how they'll treat you after. Choose the one who earns your trust, not just the one with the slickest slides.

Questions to ask before you hire

Sit down with these before choosing. Clear answers make the decision far easier.

Q: Are you licensed and insured, and can I see proof?

The answer must be a ready yes, with documents. Any hedging on license or insurance is a reason to stop right there — this is your basic protection.

Q: Can I speak with a few recent local customers?

A confident installer gladly shares references. Call them and ask especially how the company handled any problems. Reluctance here is telling.

Q: What exactly is in writing, including warranties and who does the work?

Everything that matters — system, price, warranties, permits, timeline — should be in the contract. If it's only spoken, treat it as not promised.

✓ No good question is out of bounds

You're making a big, long decision. Any installer worth hiring welcomes every question and answers plainly. That openness is itself a green flag.

Common Questions

The questions I hear most about picking a solar installer.

Q: How many quotes should I get?

Two or three is the sweet spot. It shows you the range, reveals who's honest about your roof and savings, and takes the pressure off. Anyone who discourages you from comparing is waving a red flag.

Q: What certification should I look for?

NABCEP — the North American Board of Certified Energy Practitioners — is the most respected in the trade. Ask whether the people doing your install are certified, and confirm any manufacturer certifications your equipment's warranty may require.

Q: A salesperson offered a big discount if I sign today. Should I?

No. 'Today only' pressure is a classic warning sign. A fair price on a decades-long investment doesn't vanish overnight. Take the time to compare — a trustworthy company respects that.

Q: Is 'free solar' real?

Not really. It usually means a company owns the panels and sells you the power, or signs you to long financing — not that it's free. It can be a reasonable choice, but read every word first, or have someone you trust review it.

★ Not sure who to trust?

Choosing an installer is where a neutral second opinion helps most. Call or text me at (330) 200-8042 and I'll help you weigh your options honestly, with no one to favor and nothing to sell.

You don't have to do this alone

You just have to remember that a friendly, patient person is one call away.

I hope this guide made choosing a solar installer feel a little less daunting and a lot more doable. Keep it in a drawer with your other home papers, come back to a page whenever you need it, and don't worry about memorizing anything.

When you'd rather have a hand, that's exactly what I do. I come to your home, work at your pace, and never make you feel rushed or silly for asking. A first visit is a flat \$99, and for the parts that don't need me on-site I can often help right on your screen for \$49. Every visit comes with a 30-day, come-back-free guarantee. I don't sell solar and I don't do the licensed electrical work or the rooftop install myself — I help you understand it all, ask the right questions, and line up a trustworthy local solar installer, so you never feel talked into anything.

★ Bill's Home Tech — real help, close to home

Call or text me at (330) 200-8042, or visit BillsHomeTech.com. Serving Atwater and all of Portage County. 30+ years of patient, plain-English tech help — and if you're ever not 100% happy with a visit, I'll make it right or refund it. That's a promise. — Bill

Green Flags vs Red Flags

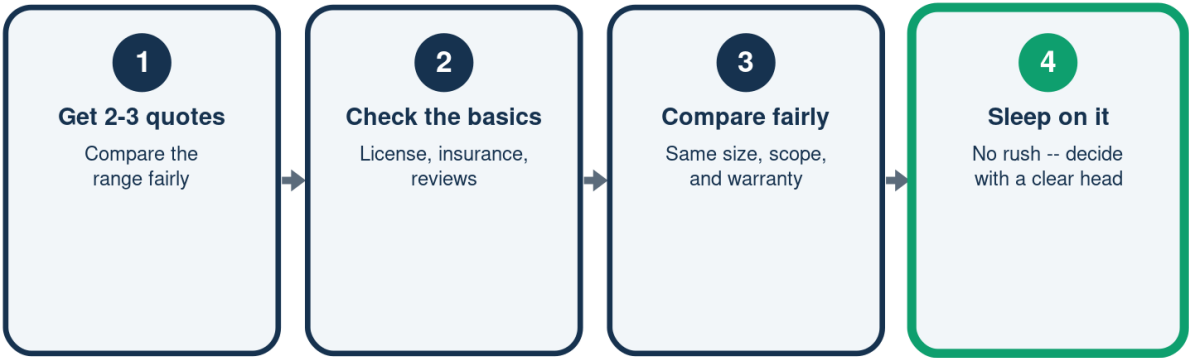
What to seek in an installer, and what to shun

	Green flag	Red flag
Sales style	Patient	'Sign today'
Credentials	Licensed, NABCEP	Vague or none
Local record	Years nearby	Far-off, new
Quotes	Welcomes shopping	'Don't compare'
Warranty	Clear, written	Spoken only

No one's perfect on every line -- watch the overall pattern.

How to Choose an Installer

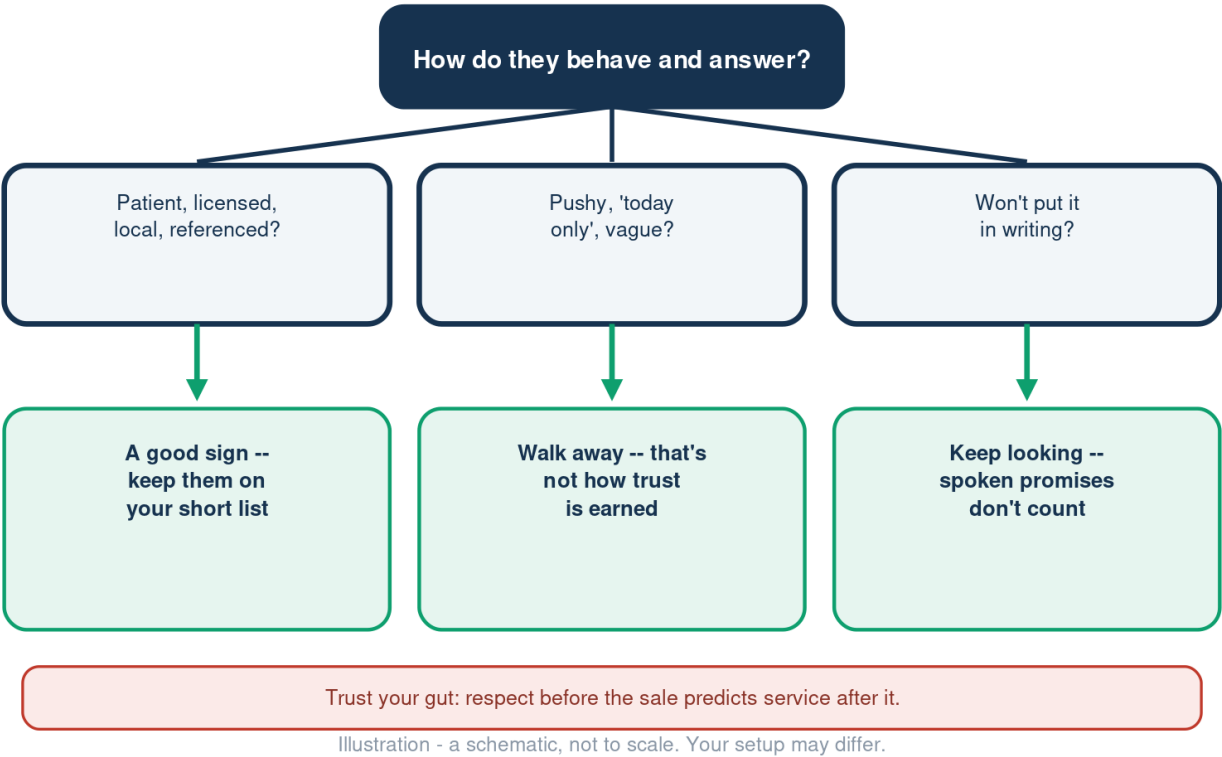
The unhurried path to a good decision



Comparison is your best protection against a pushy pitch.

Is This a Good Installer?

How they act tells you as much as what they say



Ask Who Handles What

A full-service installer owns the whole job

	Ask about	Good answer
Permits	Do you file them?	Yes, we do
Interconnection	Who applies?	We handle it
Warranty claims	Who processes?	Us, for years
Service calls	Who comes back?	Our own crew

One company responsible for it all means no finger-pointing later.



Need a Real Person?

You do not have to remember all of it.
You just have to remember you can call.
Friendly, in-home tech help -- I come to you.

BILL'S PROMISE

If you are not 100% happy with a visit, I will make it right -- or refund it. No awkwardness, no fine print. That is how I would want to be treated.

(330) 200-8042 · BillsHomeTech.com

Bill@BillsHomeTech.com · Mon–Sat 9:00 AM – 7:30 PM

— Bill

Prefer help without a visit?

Bill can screen-share and fix many things remotely — a flat \$49, free for Support Plan members.



A Note From Bill

A quick note from Bill.

I write these guides to make home tech a little less frustrating, and I do my best to keep every step accurate and up to date. Still, every home, device, and setup is a bit different, so I can't promise a guide will match yours exactly or fix your particular problem. These guides are for general information only — they're not professional, legal, or financial advice, and they don't replace your device's own manual or the manufacturer's instructions. Please go slow, use your own good judgment, and use everything here at your own risk. If a step involves electrical wiring, a gas appliance, a water heater, plumbing, or climbing a ladder — or if anything just doesn't feel safe — please stop and call a licensed professional (or give me a call at 330-200-8042). Bill's Home Tech and Bill Davis can't be responsible for any damage, data loss, or injury that comes from using these guides. Thanks for reading, and stay safe out there.

— *Bill*



Book a visit —
billshometech.com/book

Use of these guides is subject to our Terms of Use (billshometech.com/terms-of-use).

(330) 200-8042 · BillsHomeTech.com

Bill@BillsHomeTech.com · Mon–Sat 9:00 AM – 7:30 PM

For general information only — not professional advice. Use at your own risk. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech