



An Extended Guide · No. 1515

Common Solar Myths & Misconceptions

Sorting the tall
tales from the facts

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! 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. Solar attracts more than its share of tall tales — so this guide sorts the myths from the facts, gently and plainly.

Sorting solar fact from fiction

Few home topics collect as many myths as solar — some from eager salespeople, some from old information, some just passed over the fence. This guide gathers the ones I hear most and answers each plainly, so you can decide on facts, not folklore.

I'm Bill, of Bill's Home Tech in Portage County. I've no panels to sell, so I can be straight with you — correcting the overblown promises and the needless fears alike. The truth about solar is more reassuring than either the hype or the horror stories.

Think of this as the myth-busting companion to the whole series. Where a myth touches a bigger topic, I'll point you to the guide that covers it in full. Let's clear the air.

★ Heard a claim that sounds off? Run it by me

If a salesperson or a neighbor tells you something about solar that sounds too good or too scary, that's a perfect thing to check with me. Call or text (330) 200-8042 and I'll give you the honest read.

The biggest myths, on one page

The tall tales you're most likely to hear, and the short truth of each.

- ❑ 'Solar powers my house in a blackout' — only with a battery.
- ❑ 'Solar doesn't work in Ohio' — it does; we just make less in winter.
- ❑ 'Solar is free' — it's an investment; 'free' usually means a lease.
- ❑ 'Panels wreck my roof' — a good install seals it; leaks are rare.
- ❑ 'I can install it myself' — no; it's a permitted, professional job.
- ❑ 'The savings are guaranteed' — honest estimates come in ranges, not promises.

✓ **Absolutes are the warning sign**

Notice how many myths trade in words like always, never, free, and guaranteed. Reality speaks in ranges and 'it depends.' When you hear an absolute, reach for a little healthy skepticism.

Myth: 'Solar powers my house in a blackout'

The most common and most important myth to clear up, because believing it leads to a rude surprise.

The truth: a plain grid-tied solar system shuts off during a power outage, even in bright sun, so it won't power your home in a blackout. This is a required safety feature (anti-islanding) that keeps your system from energizing lines the utility crews are repairing.

To keep power on in an outage, you need a battery, which safely disconnects your home from the grid and runs your chosen circuits. That's the whole story of our why-it-goes-dark and adding-batteries guides. Believe the myth and you'll be dark in a storm; know the truth and you can plan real backup.

! This myth causes real disappointment

Folks who assume solar means blackout power are the ones caught out during their first outage. If backup matters to you, plan for a battery — panels alone won't do it.

Myth: 'Solar doesn't work in cloudy, cold Ohio'

A myth that stops many good candidates before they even look. Let's put it to rest.

The truth: solar works fine in Ohio. We get less sun than the desert Southwest, but plenty over the year, and many Ohio homes run happily on solar. Cold weather actually helps panels work a touch better, and cloudy days mean less power, not none.

You'll make far more in summer than in our short, gray winters — what matters is the whole-year total, which is what a good estimate is built around. Our Ohio-sun-and-snow guide covers this fully. Don't let the cloudy reputation decide for you; let your roof, shade, and bills decide.

✓ Less than Arizona isn't 'not worth it'

Plenty of places less sunny than Ohio have thriving solar. The honest comparison isn't Ohio versus Arizona — it's your Ohio roof versus your Ohio electric bill.

Myth: 'Snow ruins solar all winter'

A close cousin of the Ohio myth, and just as overblown.

The truth: snow pauses production only while it covers the panels, and it usually slides off on its own soon after, since panels are smooth glass set at an angle and warm in the sun. A snowy spell simply means a lean spell, already part of the winter picture — not a season-long shutdown.

And you should never climb up to clear snow off a roof array; it's not worth a fall, and the sun handles it. A reachable ground array can be cleared gently from the ground if you like. Winter is leaner, but far from ruined.

! Never climb up to clear snow

The myth that you must scramble onto a snowy roof to save your production is both false and dangerous. Let the snow slide off on its own. No lost winter output is worth a fall.

Myth: 'Panels need constant cleaning'

A myth that makes solar sound like a chore it isn't.

The truth: for most homes, rain does the cleaning. Panels are smooth and tilted, so rain rinses away most dust and pollen, and many owners never clean their panels at all with no real loss. Hands-on cleaning is the occasional exception — heavy pollen, bird droppings, farm dust — not a routine.

When a cleaning does help, it's done gently from the ground or by a pro, never by climbing up, as our maintenance guide explains. Solar may be the lowest-maintenance thing you own; the constant-cleaning myth simply isn't so.

✓ Let the rain do the work

Before planning any cleaning, remember the next good rain will likely handle it. Solar's reputation as high-upkeep is one of the least true things said about it.

Two kinds of homes, two sets of needs

A couple of myths land differently for town and country folks, so it's worth a word on each.

If you live in town or the suburbs

In town or the suburbs, the myths that mislead most are about blackout power (believing panels alone will do it) and roof damage. Both are worth correcting before you decide.

- Don't assume rooftop panels mean blackout power — you need a battery.
- A good install seals the roof; leaks are rare with a reputable installer.
- 'Free solar' pitches (usually leases) are common in busier markets.
- Judge your roof, not the cloudy-Ohio myth.

If you are out in the country on a well

Out in the country, the tempting myth is often about going fully off-grid or 'independence' — which is a bigger commitment than it sounds — plus assuming solar alone keeps the well water on.

- Grid-tied solar doesn't make you independent — that takes a battery.
- Going truly off-grid is costly and demanding, rarely worth it with a line at the road.
- Solar alone won't run your well pump in an outage — plan backup.
- A ground array is easy to keep clean, contrary to the upkeep myth.

★ Chasing an off-grid dream?

If you're rural and drawn to full independence, let me give you the honest picture of what it takes before you commit. Call (330) 200-8042 — no pitch, just straight talk.

Myth: 'Solar is free'

The 'free solar' pitch is everywhere, and it misleads a lot of good people.

The truth: solar is a real investment, not free. 'Free solar' almost always means a company owns the panels on your roof and you pay them for years — a lease or power-purchase agreement — or you sign a long loan. That can be a reasonable choice, but it isn't free, and you don't own the system.

Likewise, 'the government will pay for it' overstates incentives, which change, vary by situation, and rarely cover everything — and, for homeowner-owned systems, the big federal credit ended after 2025. Our paying-for-solar and incentives guides tell the honest story.

! 'Free' refers to the upfront cost, not the deal

When you hear 'free solar,' read it as 'no money down' — usually a lease you'll pay for over many years. Read the whole agreement, and never let 'free' rush you into signing.

Myth: 'Solar makes me independent from the utility'

A myth that trades on an appealing dream — and gets the reality wrong.

The truth: a grid-tied system, for all its benefits, leans on the utility and shuts off without it. Having panels doesn't, by itself, make you independent — that's right there in the name 'grid-tied.' You still draw from the grid at night and on dark days.

Real independence — keeping power through outages, or leaving the utility entirely — comes only from a battery (a hybrid system) or going fully off-grid, which is a big, costly commitment. If independence is your dream, it's a battery you're really after, as our system-types guide explains.

! Watch this myth in sales pitches

Beware any pitch selling grid-tied panels on a promise of 'energy independence' or 'never lose power.' Without a battery, neither holds. Honest sellers are careful with those words.

Myth: 'Panels will wreck and leak my roof'

A common fear that keeps folks from a system that would serve them well.

The truth: a roof mount is attached through the roofing, and a skilled installer seals every attachment properly, so a good install doesn't leak. The installer's workmanship warranty should cover those seals — ask about it, as our warranties guide urges. Leaks from a quality install are uncommon.

If you'd still rather not put any holes in the roof — or yours is aging — a ground mount avoids the question entirely, touching nothing on the house. Either way, 'panels wreck your roof' is a fear that a reputable installer and, if you like, a ground mount put to rest.

✓ Reroof first if it's close, and you're set

The real roof advice isn't fear of leaks — it's timing: if your roof is near the end of its life, replace it before panels go up. On a sound roof, a good install is watertight.

Myth: 'I can just install it myself'

A myth that's not only wrong but genuinely dangerous.

The truth: home solar is a licensed professional's job. It requires building and electrical permits, a utility interconnection, rooftop work, and higher-voltage wiring that can seriously injure the untrained. A kit off the internet doesn't change any of that — it's not a weekend project.

Beyond the danger, a do-it-yourself install would likely be unpermitted, uninspected, uninsurable, and a problem when you sell. This whole series is about understanding, evaluating, and living with solar — never installing it yourself. Leave the install to the pros; your part is choosing well.

! This is a permitted, professional job — always

Please don't be tempted by DIY solar kits. The rooftop work and DC wiring are hazardous, and the system must be permitted, inspected, and connected by the utility. Your role is to understand it, not to build it.

Myth: 'The savings are guaranteed'

A myth dressed up as a selling point, and a reason to be careful.

The truth: honest savings estimates come as ranges built on assumptions — future utility rates, system performance, incentives, net metering — any of which can change. No one can guarantee what your utility will charge in ten years, so no one can honestly guarantee your exact savings or a precise payback.

Be especially wary of a promise to 'eliminate your electric bill.' Most solar homes still have a modest bill from fixed charges and nighttime power. Our reading-a-quote guide shows how to check the assumptions behind any savings number.

! Guarantees and 'zero bill' are overpromises

A specific guaranteed savings figure, or a promise to wipe out your bill, is a sales overreach. Ask what it assumes, pull one assumption, and watch it wobble. Honest sellers deal in ranges.

Myth: 'Solar works at night' (or by moonlight)

A gentler myth, but worth a quick, clear correction.

The truth: panels make power from sunlight, so they produce during daylight and effectively nothing at night. Moonlight is far too faint to generate meaningful power. After dark, your home draws from the grid, or from a battery if you have one charged from the day's sun.

This is simply how solar works, as our how-it-works guide describes. It's also why a battery matters for evening and outage power — it stores daytime sun for nighttime use. No panel, however good, makes power in the dark.

✓ Night power comes from the grid or a battery

Solar makes power by day; at night you lean on the grid or a charged battery. That's not a shortcoming — it's just the nature of sunlight, and a battery is the answer if you want your own power after dark.

Myth: 'A battery runs my whole house for days'

A hopeful myth that sets folks up for disappointment about backup.

The truth: a home battery is usually sized to run chosen essential circuits — fridge, some lights, internet, maybe a furnace fan or well pump — for a while, not the entire house at full tilt for days. Try to run everything and even a big battery empties fast; run just essentials and it stretches, especially as the sun refills it each day.

That's not a flaw; it's smart design, as our adding-batteries guide explains. Whole-home backup for days is possible but takes much more battery and cost. Sizing to a sensible must-run list is what keeps backup affordable and lasting.

✓ Essentials for a while beats everything briefly

A battery's job is usually to carry your essentials through an outage, recharging from the sun — not to run the whole house for days. Expect that, and a battery is a wonderful thing rather than a letdown.

Myth: 'Panels wear out in a few years'

A myth that undersells just how durable panels are.

The truth: panels are the long-haul part, routinely working for decades. They have no moving parts to wear out and fade only a small fraction each year — which is why their performance warranties often reach around a quarter-century, as our warranties guide covers.

The part more likely to need attention over the years is the inverter, the busiest component, which may be serviced or replaced mid-life. But the panels themselves are built for the long run. Far from wearing out fast, they're among the most durable things you can put on a house.

✓ Panels are marathoners

Don't let the wear-out myth worry you. Panels quietly work for decades, fading only slightly. Plan for perhaps one inverter chapter over the system's long life, and enjoy the panels' longevity.

The myth-versus-fact roundup

The whole collection on one page, to keep or share.

Myth	Fact
Powers home in a blackout	Only with a battery
Doesn't work in Ohio	It does; leaner in winter
Solar is free	An investment; 'free' = lease
Makes me independent	Only a battery/off-grid does
Wrecks the roof	Good install seals it
I can DIY it	Permitted, professional job

Keep this handy the next time a pitch or a rumor gives you pause. Nearly every solar myth shrinks to a calm, one-line fact once you look at it plainly.

Why these myths stick around

It helps to know where the tall tales come from, so you can weigh what you hear.

Some myths come from eager salespeople overpromising — guaranteed savings, free solar, energy independence. Others come from outdated information, like an old article quoting an incentive that has since changed. And some are just honest confusion passed along, like the belief that panels keep the lights on in any outage.

None of that makes the people repeating them dishonest — solar has changed fast, and the details are genuinely confusing. The remedy is simply to check current facts from good sources rather than folklore, which is what this whole series is for.

✓ Old solar info goes stale fast

Because solar and its incentives change quickly, a fact from a few years ago — or a neighbor's memory — may be out of date. When it matters, verify the current picture rather than trusting an old story.

How to check any solar claim

A simple habit for testing whatever you hear, from a salesperson or over the fence.

- ❑ Notice absolutes — 'always,' 'never,' 'free,' 'guaranteed' — as warning signs.
- ❑ Ask 'how do you know?' and expect assumptions, not just a big number.
- ❑ For tax or incentive claims, verify with a licensed tax professional.
- ❑ For utility or net-metering claims, ask your utility directly.
- ❑ For roof or system claims, ask a neutral installer — or me.
- ❑ Get anything that matters in writing before you act on it.

✓ Right question, right source

Most myths crumble under two questions: 'how do you know?' and 'can I see that in writing?' Match tax questions to a tax pro and utility questions to your utility, and the truth comes out.

Where to get honest answers

When you want to separate fact from fiction, go to sources with no stake in your signature.

For tax and incentive questions, a licensed tax professional. For net-metering and utility programs, your utility or co-op. For how a system would work on your specific home, a reputable installer — ideally more than one — and, for a neutral second opinion with nothing to sell, me.

The rest of this series is built to give you honest, plain-English answers on each topic. When a claim gives you pause, there's almost always a companion guide — and a phone call to me — that can set it straight.

★ A neutral opinion is a phone call away

I don't sell solar and take no referral fees, so when you need someone with no stake to tell you whether a claim holds up, call or text me at (330) 200-8042. That's exactly what I'm here for.

A few more quick ones

Some smaller myths, cleared up in a line each.

- **'Solar needs direct sun all day.'** No — it produces in diffuse light too, just less.
- **'Panels will overheat and fail in summer.'** No — they're built for it, though heat trims output slightly.
- **'One shaded panel kills the whole system.'** Not with microinverters or optimizers, which limit shade's effect.
- **'Solar is only for the wealthy.'** Various ways to pay exist — though verify any incentive and read the terms.
- **'Hail will smash the panels.'** Panels are tested for hail and high wind; serious damage is uncommon.

✓ When in doubt, ask — don't assume

For every myth here there are a dozen more floating around. The habit that serves you is simple: when a claim sounds off, ask a source with nothing to sell before you believe it or act on it.

Common Questions

The myth-shaped questions I hear most, answered plainly.

Q: Will solar keep my power on in a blackout?

Only with a battery. Plain grid-tied solar shuts off in an outage for safety, even in full sun. A battery (or generator) is what keeps your power on — panels alone won't. It's the most important myth to get straight.

Q: Is solar really worth it in cloudy Ohio?

Yes, for many homes. We get less sun than the Southwest but plenty over the year, cold helps panels, and cloudy days still produce. Judge your roof, shade, and bills — not the gray reputation.

Q: Is 'free solar' a scam?

Not necessarily a scam, but not free either — it usually means a lease or PPA where a company owns the panels and you pay for years. Read the whole agreement and know you don't own the system. 'Free' refers to no money down.

Q: Do solar panels wear out quickly?

No — panels are the long-haul part, working for decades and fading only a little each year, with performance warranties often around 25 years. The inverter, working hardest, is the part more likely to need service mid-life.

★ Heard something that doesn't add up?

That's exactly when to call someone with no stake in your decision. Call or text me at (330) 200-8042 and I'll give you the honest, plain-English truth — with nothing to sell you.

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 the truth about common solar myths 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

Top Solar Myths vs Facts

The tall tales you'll hear most, set straight

	Myth	Fact
Powers a blackout	On its own	Needs a battery
Not in Ohio	Too cloudy	Works fine here
Solar is free	No cost	'Free' = a lease
Wrecks the roof	It leaks	Good install seals
I can DIY it	Weekend job	Permitted, pro job

Absolutes like 'free' and 'guaranteed' are the warning signs.

More Myths vs Facts

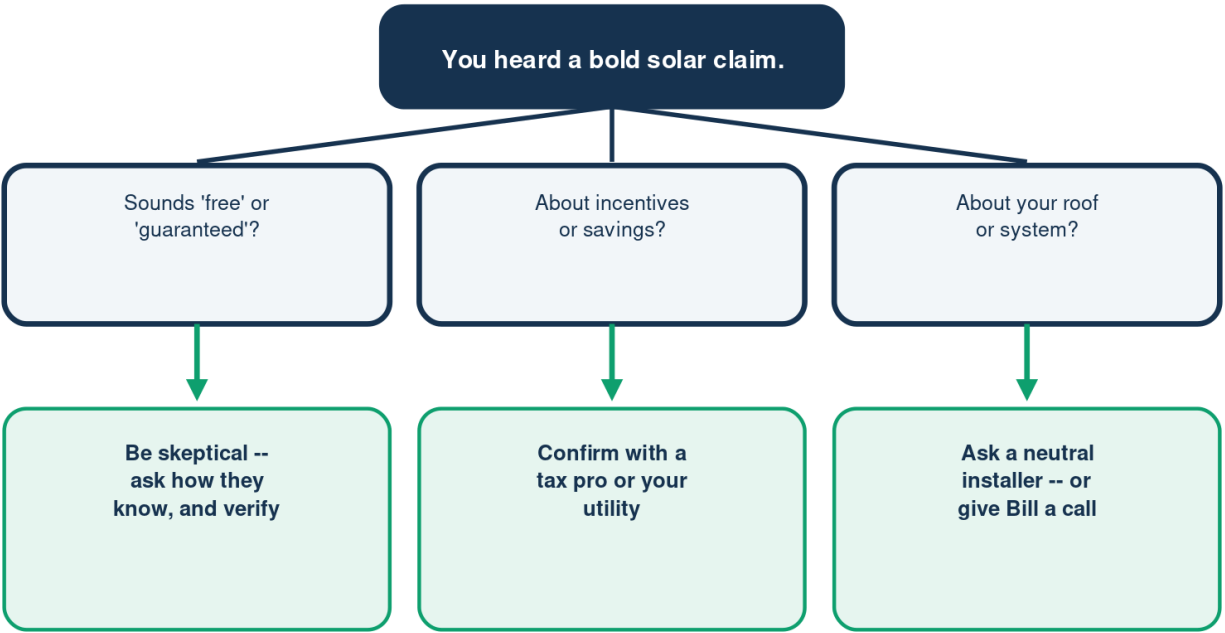
A few more that mislead good folks

	Myth	Fact
Works at night	Any time	Daylight only
Makes me independent	Grid-tied does	Only a battery does
Panels wear out fast	A few years	Decades
Savings guaranteed	A promise	An honest range

Reality speaks in ranges and 'it depends' -- not certainties.

Is That Solar Claim True?

A quick test for whatever you hear

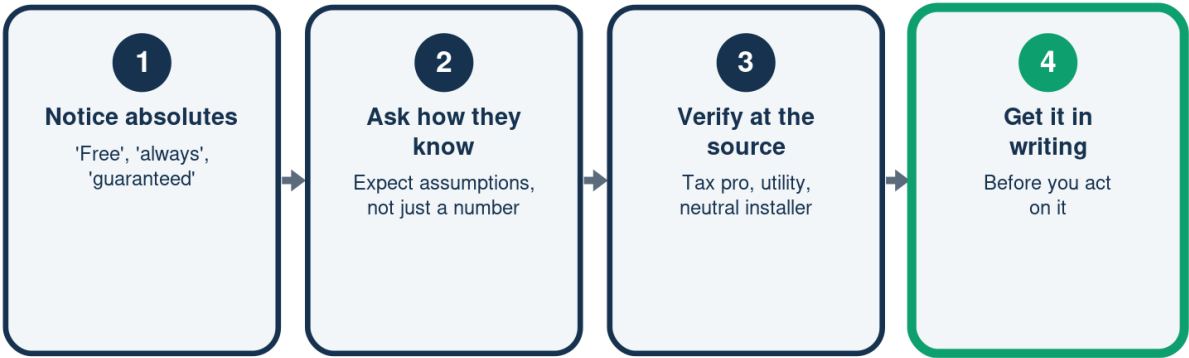


Old solar info goes stale fast -- verify current facts before acting.

Illustration - a schematic, not to scale. Your setup may differ.

How to Check a Claim

Two questions crumble most myths



'How do you know?' and 'in writing?' expose most tall tales.



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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*



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