



An Extended Guide · No. 1493

Is Your Home a Good Fit for Solar?

An honest gut-check
before you spend a dime

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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. This guide is the honest gut-check to do before you spend a dime or invite a single salesperson over.

Let's find out if solar suits your home

Solar is a fine idea for a great many Ohio homes — but not every home, and not every situation. Before you get swept up in a sales pitch, let's walk calmly through the handful of things that really decide whether solar makes sense for you.

I'm Bill, of Bill's Home Tech in Portage County. I've spent decades helping folks make sensible technology decisions without pressure. Nothing here is a hard sell — it's a friendly checklist you can go through at your kitchen table.

The goal isn't a yes or a no today. It's to know where your home stands, and what to look at more closely, so that any conversation with an installer starts from a place of confidence.

★ A free second opinion, before you commit

If a company is pushing you to sign, that's my cue to slow things down. Call or text me at (330) 200-8042 and I'll help you weigh whether your home is really a good candidate — with nothing to sell you either way.

The whole checklist, on one page

A good candidate for solar tends to have most of these going for it. Don't worry if you're missing one or two — it just means look closer.

- ☐ You own your home and plan to stay in it for a good while.
- ☐ You have a sunny roof or open ground that isn't heavily shaded.
- ☐ Your roof is in good shape and not due for replacement soon.
- ☐ Your electric bills are big enough that trimming them matters.
- ☐ You know roughly what you want — lower bills, backup power, or both.
- ☐ There's no rule in your neighborhood that flatly forbids panels.

✓ Missing a box isn't a deal-breaker

A shaded roof might be solved with a ground mount; an old roof can be replaced first. These boxes tell you what to plan for, not whether to give up. We take each one slowly in the pages ahead.

First question: do you own it, and will you stay?

Solar rewards patience. Its benefits build up gently over many years, so the two questions that matter most are whether it's yours and how long you'll enjoy it.

If you own your home, solar is yours to decide on. If you rent, the roof isn't yours to change — though some areas offer community solar, where you subscribe to a nearby solar farm instead. We touch on that later.

Tenure — how long you'll stay — matters because the value adds up over time. If you expect to be in this home for years to come, that's ideal. If a move might be near, don't rule solar out, but do read our guide on what happens to solar when you sell.

✓ Staying put is solar's best friend

The longer you'll be under that roof, the more sense owning a system tends to make. If you're recently settled somewhere you love, you're in the sweet spot.

Where would the panels go?

Panels need a home of their own — a suitable roof, or a patch of open ground. Most homes use the roof, but the yard is a real option too.

A good solar roof has enough unshaded space facing a helpful direction, and it's sound enough to hold panels for decades. We give roofs their own full guide, because the details matter, but a first glance tells you a lot: is there a broad, sunny slope up there?

No good roof? Don't count yourself out. Homes with open, sunny land — common out in the country — can mount panels on a frame in the yard instead. Our roof-versus-ground guide compares the two honestly.

✓ Think about the whole footprint

It isn't just the roof's size — it's the sunny, unshaded, well-facing part of it. A big roof shaded by tall trees may offer less usable space than a small, open one.

How much sun does that spot really get?

Sun is the fuel. The more direct, unshaded sunlight your panels catch across the day and the year, the more they'll do for you.

Two things shape it: which way the surface faces, and what's blocking the sun. In our part of the world, a south-facing roof or array generally does best, with east and west still useful and north the weakest. Your installer measures this precisely; you can eyeball it now.

Shade is the quiet spoiler. A tree, a chimney, a neighbor's rooftop, or a dormer can cast a shadow that takes a real bite out of production — especially if it falls during the sunny midday hours. Note what shades your roof, and when.

! Watch out for growing trees

A sapling that barely shades the roof today can be a real problem in ten years. When you judge shade, picture the trees a decade from now, not just this afternoon. The roof guide has more on reading shade.

How much electricity do you use?

Solar earns its keep by replacing power you'd otherwise buy. So the bigger and steadier your electric use, the more a system has to work with.

If your bills are already small, solar still works — there's just less to save, so the math is tighter. If you run central air, electric heat, a well pump, or you're thinking about an electric car, your usage is the kind solar can make a real dent in.

Gather a year of your electric bills, or pull them up online. A whole year matters because usage swings with the seasons. An installer will want them, and they tell you honestly how much room there is to trim.

★ I'll help you make sense of your usage

Utility bills can be a maze of charges and terms. Bring me a few and I'll help you find your actual usage and understand what you're paying for — a useful first step whether or not you go solar. Call (330) 200-8042.

What do you want solar to do for you?

This is the question that quietly decides everything else. Two homes with identical roofs might need very different systems.

Mostly lower bills

If your aim is a friendlier electric bill, a straightforward grid-tied system may be all you need — no battery, less cost, less complexity.

Backup power in outages

If keeping the lights (or the well pump) on during outages matters, you're looking at a battery, which changes the plan and the budget. Be honest with yourself about how much outages worry you.

Independence or peace of mind

Some folks simply like making their own power. That's a fine reason too — just name it, so your system is built around what you actually value.

✓ There's no single right answer

Most people want a blend. Naming your top priority just helps you and your installer aim at the same target instead of talking past each other.

Are there rules where you live?

Before you fall in love with the idea, make sure nothing in your neighborhood stands in the way. Usually the path is clear, but it's worth a look.

Some neighborhood or homeowners' associations have rules about where panels may go or how visible they can be. Historic districts sometimes have extra say. A quick check of your HOA papers, or a call to the township, saves a headache later.

Beyond that, every install needs local permits and a utility hookup — that's normal and your installer handles it. It isn't a rule that stops you; it's the standard, safe process, which we cover in the install guide.

✓ Ask early, not late

If you're in an HOA or a historic district, a five-minute question up front beats an expensive surprise after you've signed. Most places in our area are perfectly solar-friendly.

How old is your roof?

This one catches people out, so let's be clear about it. Panels are meant to stay put for decades — so the roof beneath them needs to be ready for that long haul.

If your roof is newer or in good shape, wonderful. If it's getting on in years and might need replacing soon, it's far cheaper and simpler to replace it first, before panels go up. Taking panels down and putting them back to reroof later is costly and avoidable.

You don't have to judge this alone — a roofer or your installer will assess it. But if you already know your shingles are near the end, factor a new roof into your thinking from the start.

! Reroof first if it's close

The single most common regret I hear about is putting panels on a tired roof. If replacement is likely within a handful of years, do the roof first. Your installer will tell you honestly if it can wait.

Two kinds of homes, two sets of needs

Whether your home is a good fit looks a little different in town than it does out in the country. Here's how the checklist tends to shake out.

If you live in town or the suburbs

On a typical in-town or suburban lot, the roof is usually the star, the grid is close and reliable, and outages are short. Fit mostly comes down to your roof's sun, shade, and condition.

- A sunny, sound roof facing a good direction is the main thing to confirm.
- Neighbors' trees and buildings are common sources of shade to check.
- Lower, steadier bills may make a simple no-battery system a fine fit.
- Check any HOA or historic-district rules before you get attached.

If you are out in the country on a well

Out in the country, you often have more room and more reason. Open land can host a ground array, bills can be larger, and — because your well pump needs power — backup may move from 'nice' to 'necessary.'

- Wide, sunny yards can make a ground mount a strong option.
- A well pump and longer outages push many rural homes toward a battery.
- Rural electric co-ops handle credits differently — confirm with yours.
- More usage (well, outbuildings, shop) gives solar more to work with.

★ Not sure how your place scores?

Tell me about your roof, your land, your bills, and your outages, and I'll give you an honest read on whether solar is worth pursuing for your home. No pressure, no pitch. Call (330) 200-8042.

What if you rent, or share a roof?

Solar on your own roof needs a roof you own and control. If that's not your situation, you still have a path or two.

Renters, condo owners, and folks in multi-unit buildings usually can't put panels on a roof they don't control. That's not a failing on your part — it's just how ownership works.

The alternative to ask about is community solar, where you subscribe to a share of a larger solar project nearby and see the benefit on your utility bill, without anything on your own roof. Availability varies by area and utility, so check what's offered where you live.

✓ Ask your utility about community solar

If your own roof is off the table, a call to your electric utility to ask whether they offer or partner on community solar is the right next step. It's a way to support and benefit from solar without owning panels.

What if your roof isn't perfect?

Few roofs are flawless. A less-than-ideal roof rarely means no solar — it usually means a smaller system or a different approach.

If only part of your roof gets good sun, an installer can simply put panels there and size the system to match. Modern setups with panel-level electronics also handle partial shade better than older ones did — more on that in the parts guide.

If the roof really won't do — wrong direction, too shaded, too old and not worth redoing — open ground may be your answer. A ground-mounted array can be aimed perfectly and kept clear of shade, which is why rural homes often prefer it.

✓ **Smaller can still be worthwhile**

A modest system that covers part of your usage is a perfectly good outcome. You don't have to power the whole house to come out ahead. Aim for what fits your roof and your goals.

A gentle word about budget

Solar is an investment, and being honest about your budget up front keeps the whole process comfortable rather than stressful.

I won't quote you numbers — prices depend on your home, your goals, and the market, and anyone who names a figure without seeing your roof is guessing. What I can tell you is that there's usually more than one way to pay: with cash, with a loan, or through arrangements where a company owns the panels and sells you the power.

Each of those paths has real trade-offs, especially around who owns the system and what happens if you move. Our paying-for-solar guide walks through them plainly, without pressure or dollar guessing.

! Beware 'free solar' pitches

If an ad promises 'free solar,' read the fine print — it usually means someone else owns the panels and you're signing a long agreement. That can be fine, but it isn't free. Understand it before you sign.

What a real site visit will check

When you're ready for a closer look, a good installer comes out and assesses your specific home. Here's what they're really doing.

- Measuring your roof's size, slope, direction, and condition.
- Studying shade across the day and year, often with special tools.
- Looking at your electrical panel and where a system would connect.
- Reviewing a year of your electric usage to size things sensibly.
- Checking access, local rules, and what permits will be needed.

Only after all that can anyone give you an honest estimate of what your home would produce and cost. That's why this guide avoids numbers — the real ones come from a proper look at your roof, not a rule of thumb.

Signs your home is a strong candidate

If several of these describe your home, solar is well worth a serious look.

- **A broad, sunny roof** facing anywhere from east through south to west.
- **Little shade** during the middle of the day, now and for years ahead.
- **A sound, newer roof** that won't need redoing anytime soon.
- **Healthy electric bills** with room to trim.
- **Long tenure** — you plan to stay and enjoy the benefits.
- **Open land**, if the roof won't do, for a ground mount.

✓ You don't need all of them

Most good candidates are missing something. The point is the overall picture: plenty of sun, a decent place to put panels, and a reason to want the power.

Reasons to slow down or think twice

Some situations don't rule out solar but do call for extra care — and a few are genuine reasons to wait or pass.

Yellow flags — proceed thoughtfully

- Moderate shade, a roof facing mostly north, or a small usable area.
- Modest electric bills, so the savings are thinner.
- A roof with some years left but not many.

Red flags — wait or reconsider

- Deep shade over the roof for most of the day, all year.
- A roof at the end of its life that you're not ready to replace.
- Plans to move in the near future.

★ A red flag today can change tomorrow

Roofs get replaced, trees get trimmed, plans settle down. If solar isn't right just now, it may be later. I'm glad to help you revisit it when your situation shifts. Call (330) 200-8042.

A gentle self-scorecard

Run down this little table and see where your home lands. It's not a pass-or-fail — just a way to see the picture.

Factor	Good sign	Think twice if
Ownership	You own and will stay	Renting or moving soon
Roof sun	Sunny, faces E/S/W	Mostly shaded or north
Roof age	Newer, good shape	Near end of life
Bills	Larger, steady use	Very small bills
Goals	Clear on what you want	Unsure it's worth it

Mostly left-column answers? Solar is well worth pursuing. A mix? Look closer at the trouble spots. Mostly right-column? It may not be your moment — and that's okay.

Looks promising? Here's what to do next

If your home scores well, here's the calm, unhurried way to move from curious to confident.

- ❑ Gather a year of your electric bills in one place.
- ❑ Jot down your main goal — bills, backup, or both.
- ❑ Check any HOA or historic-district rules that might apply.
- ❑ Get your roof's age and condition confirmed if you're unsure.
- ❑ Read our guides on choosing an installer and reading a quote.
- ❑ Line up two or three installer quotes to compare — never just one.

✓ Take it one step at a time

You don't have to do all of this at once, and none of it commits you to anything. Each small step just leaves you better informed for the next one.

How to keep the process pressure-free

Solar can attract pushy sales tactics. A few simple habits keep you firmly in the driver's seat.

Never sign anything on a first visit, no matter how good the 'today only' deal sounds — a fair offer is still fair next week. Get everything in writing, and take the time to compare a few companies rather than the first one through the door.

It's your home and your money, so it moves at your pace. A trustworthy installer respects that; one who won't is telling you something useful about themselves.

! 'Sign today or lose the deal' is a red flag

High-pressure, time-limited pitches are a classic warning sign. Real savings and real incentives don't vanish overnight. When you feel rushed, that's exactly the moment to step back and call someone you trust.

Questions to ask yourself before committing

Sit with these before you sign anything. Clear answers here make the rest of the journey smooth.

Q: Am I confident I'll be in this home for years to come?

If yes, owning solar makes more sense. If you're unsure, read the selling-your-home guide before you decide how to pay for a system.

Q: Is my roof (or my land) genuinely a good place for panels?

Sunny, unshaded, sound, and facing a helpful direction is what you want. If you're not sure, that's the first thing to have assessed.

Q: Do I understand what I'm hoping to get out of it?

Lower bills, backup power, independence — knowing your priority keeps you from being talked into a system that doesn't fit your life.

✓ Write your answers down

Putting your answers on paper turns a vague feeling into a clear position — and gives you something steady to hold onto when a salesperson starts talking fast.

Common Questions

The questions I hear most from folks wondering whether solar is right for their home.

Q: My roof faces east and west, not south. Is that a problem?

Not necessarily. South is best here, but east and west roofs produce well too — just spread across the morning and afternoon. A good installer can tell you what your roof would really do.

Q: Is my home too old for solar?

The age of the house matters far less than the shape of the roof and the electrical panel. Older homes get solar all the time; an installer just checks that the panel and wiring are up to it.

Q: I only have a few years left in this house. Should I bother?

Maybe not by buying a system outright. But it's worth reading how solar affects a home sale first — an owned, paid-off system can be a selling point, while a lease can complicate things.

Q: Everyone on my road has solar. Does that mean I should too?

It's a good sign the area suits it, but your roof, shade, bills, and goals are your own. Judge your home on its own merits, not the neighbors'.

★ Let's figure it out together

Deciding whether solar fits is exactly the kind of no-pressure question I love to help with. Call or text me at (330) 200-8042 and we'll talk it through honestly.

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 deciding whether solar fits your home 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.

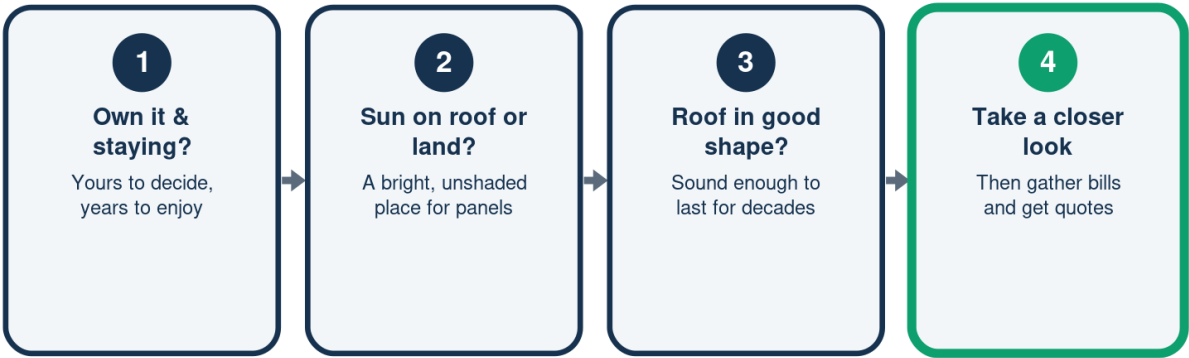
When you'd rather have a hand, that's exactly what I do. I come to your home, work at your pace, and never make you feel rushed or silly for asking. A first visit is a flat \$99, and for the parts that don't need me on-site I can often help right on your screen for \$49. Every visit comes with a 30-day, 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

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Four Honest Questions First

Answer these before you invite a single salesperson over



Mostly yes? Solar is well worth a serious, unhurried look.

Signs of a Good Fit

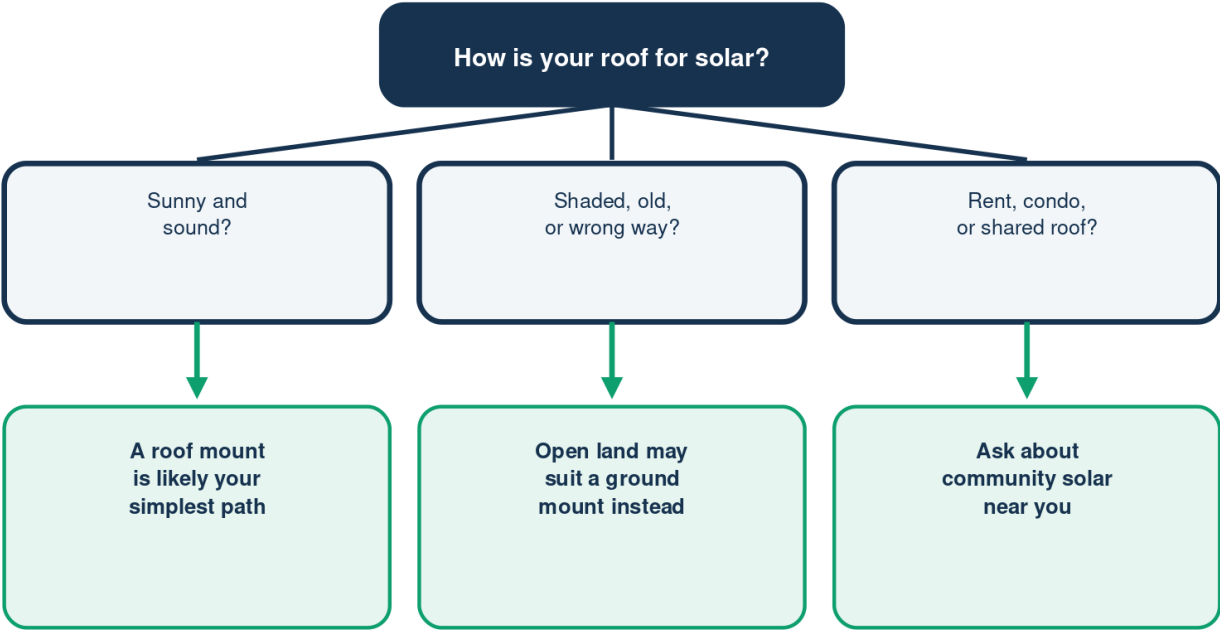
Where your home shines, and where to look closer

	Good sign	Think twice if
Ownership	Own & staying	Renting/moving
Roof sun	Sunny E/S/W	Shaded or north
Roof age	Newer, sound	Near end of life
Bill size	Larger, steady	Very small bills
Shade	Clear midday	Trees all day

Most good candidates are missing one box -- look at the whole picture.

Roof, Ground, or Neither?

Where would your panels actually live?



No perfect roof? A smaller system or a ground mount is often the answer.

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

What You Want Shapes What You Build

Name your goal and the system follows

Your main goal		What to plan for
Lower bills	Trim what you buy	Simple grid-tied
Backup power	Lights on in outage	Add a battery
Well-water safety	Water in an outage	Battery or generator
Independence	Make your own power	Larger system/battery

Most folks want a blend -- naming the top priority keeps aim true.



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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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