BILL'S HOME TECH

Home & Small Business Tech Solutions

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Ohio Net Billing vs Net Metering — Why Your Export Credit Is Small

The one Ohio rule that reshapes every solar decision — and why "sell it back" rarely pays here

Plain-English solar help from:

Bill's Home Tech

Portage County, Ohio

Tech Made Simple. Service Made Personal.

Bill Davis — Bill's Home Tech

(330) 200-8042 · bill@billshometech.com · Atwater, Ohio

Book a visit · billshometech.com/book

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SUMMARY

The 60-Second Version

In Ohio, when your panels send extra power to the grid, you are paid only a low "generation" rate — often just a few cents per kilowatt-hour — while the power you buy back costs the full retail price. That arrangement is net billing, not the generous one-for-one net metering many out-of-state pitches describe. The practical result: solar pays best when you use your power as you make it, so shift big appliances and charging to sunny midday hours, and be wary of any "size it big and sell it back" pitch, since exported power is mostly given away here.

Confirm your own utility's current export rate in writing, because the rules differ by utility and change over time. Bill will help you find and read those real terms with no sales stake.

1 The Short Version

When your solar panels make more power than your house is using, the extra flows out onto the grid, and the electric company gives you some credit for it. The crucial question is how much. In Ohio, the answer is: not very much — far less than the full price you pay to buy power back. This one fact quietly shapes every solar decision in the state.

You will hear two terms. "Net metering" is the generous, one-for-one deal that many articles and out-of-state salespeople describe. "Net billing" is the less generous arrangement most Ohio customers actually have, where exported power is paid at a low rate. Knowing the difference keeps you from believing a rosy pitch built on the wrong rules.

- Ohio mostly uses net billing, not full net metering — your export credit is small.
- Power you send to the grid earns only a low "generation" rate, often just a few cents per kWh.

- Power you buy back costs the full retail price — much more than you are credited for exports.
- So solar pays best when you USE your power as you make it, not when you "sell it back."

> **TIP**
> Before you believe any "sell power back to the utility" pitch, ask for your utility's current export rate in cents per kilowatt-hour, in writing. Then compare it to what you pay per kilowatt-hour. The gap is usually large — and it is the whole point.

2 The Grocery-Store Way to Picture It

Imagine a store that sells apples to you for a dollar each, but when you bring your own apples to sell back, pays you only twenty cents. That is roughly how exporting solar power works in Ohio. You buy grid power at the full retail price, but the power you send back earns only a fraction of that.

This is not a scandal or a trick; it is simply how the rules are set here. But it completely changes the strategy. In a full one-for-one system, banking extra power is fine because you get it back at full value. Under Ohio's net billing, every kilowatt-hour you export instead of using is mostly given away.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
> A kilowatt-hour, or kWh, is just a unit of electricity — the thing your bill counts. Watch for two different prices on the same kWh: the retail price you pay to buy it, and the much lower rate you are credited when you send it back.

3 Net Metering vs Net Billing — The Real Difference

These two words sound almost the same and mean very different things for your wallet. It is worth getting them straight, because a lot of sales math leans on blurring them together.

	Full net metering	Ohio-style net billing
Export credit	Full retail rate	Low "generation" rate
Value of exported power	High — like a savings account	Low — mostly given away
Best strategy	Size freely; bank the extra	Use your power as you make it
Who has it	Some other states	Most Ohio customers

Under true net metering, a kilowatt-hour you export is worth the same as one you use, so the timing of your usage barely matters. Under Ohio net billing, a kilowatt-hour you export is worth only a few cents while one you use saves you the full retail price — so timing matters a great deal.

WATCH OUT

If a salesperson describes a generous one-for-one arrangement, ask directly: "Is that the rule for my specific utility in Ohio, right now?" For most Ohio customers it is not. Out-of-state scripts often assume rules that do not apply here.

4 Why Ohio Works This Way

Ohio does not have a statewide law guaranteeing full one-for-one net metering for most customers. Instead, the big utilities credit exported power at a lower "generation" or avoided-cost rate, set through the state's regulatory process. The details have been fought over for years and can shift, which is one more reason to confirm the current terms yourself.

You do not need to follow the politics of it. What matters for your decision is simply the number: what your utility credits you, today, for a kilowatt-hour you export. That number drives how you should size and use a system here.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
> The rules are reviewed and occasionally changed by state regulators, so an export rate you read online could be out of date. The safest source is your own utility's current tariff or a recent bill, not a years-old article.

5 What the Big Ohio Utilities Pay — Roughly

Across the major Northeast Ohio utilities, the credit for exported solar is commonly in the low single-digit cents per kilowatt-hour — very roughly in the neighborhood of three to about eleven cents depending on the utility, your supplier, and the current rules. Meanwhile the all-in price you pay to buy power is usually considerably higher. The exact figures move, so treat these as ballpark only.

- Your export credit: often just a few cents per kWh — confirm your utility's current rate.
- Your retail price to buy power: typically much higher once delivery and supply are added up.
- The gap between the two is why self-use beats exporting in Ohio.
- Your supplier choice can affect the generation rate, so your own bill is the real source.

WATCH OUT

Export rates and rules differ between utilities like AEP Ohio and the FirstEnergy companies, and they change over time. Rather than trust a number from an ad, I can help you find your utility's current export terms and read them with you.

6 Why This Means "Use It, Don't Sell It"

Here is the practical lesson that flows from all of this. Because a kilowatt-hour you use yourself saves you the full retail price, while one you export earns only a few cents, your solar is worth the most when your house consumes the power at the moment the panels make it. That is called self-consumption, and in Ohio it is where the real savings live.

This flips a common sales pitch on its head. "Build a big system and sell power back to the electric company" sounds appealing, but in Ohio that exported power is barely paid for. A right-sized system whose power you mostly use yourself will usually beat an oversized one banking on exports.

> *In Ohio, a kilowatt-hour used is worth far more than a kilowatt-hour sold. Size and run your solar around that.*

Rather not do this yourself? I'll come to your home and set it up for you — a flat $99 first visit across Portage County, Ohio and nearby communities. Outside the area? I also help remotely by phone or screen-share. Book at billshometech.com/book or call (330) 200-8042.

7 Simple Ways to Use More of Your Own Solar

Since self-use is where the value is, there are easy, no-gadget habits that let you capture more of your own power during the sunny midday hours when the panels are producing most. None of these require anything fancy; they are just a shift in timing.

1. Run big appliances — dishwasher, clothes washer and dryer — during the day instead of at night.
2. If you have central air or a heat pump, let it do more of its work in the afternoon.
3. Charge an electric car, e-bike, or big batteries during daylight when you can.
4. Heat water or run the pool pump midday, if you have timers for them.

WATCH OUT

You do not need to obsess over this. Shifting even a couple of the biggest power users to daytime meaningfully raises how much of your solar you keep for yourself — which in Ohio is the difference between full value and a few cents.

8 What This Means for Sizing

Because exporting barely pays here, the smart target in Ohio is usually a system sized to cover the power you can actually use, not one built to flood the grid with surplus. An oversized system costs more up front and then gives away much of its extra production for pennies, which lengthens payback.

This is the opposite of what a commission-based salesperson may push, since a bigger system means a bigger sale. A good, honest sizing starts from your real usage and your daytime patterns, then matches the system to them. We cover this fully in our "Sizing Solar to Your Electric Bill" guide.

WATCH OUT

Be wary of a quote for a system much larger than your yearly usage, justified by "selling the extra back." In Ohio that extra is mostly given away at a few cents. A bigger system is not automatically a better deal — often the reverse.

9 How a Battery Changes the Picture (A Little)

One reasonable response to low export rates is a battery, which stores your midday surplus so you can use it in the evening instead of exporting it for pennies and buying it back at full price. That captures more of your solar's value — and it also gives you backup power in an outage.

But a battery is a real added cost, and with export rates low the savings alone may not pay for it quickly. Most people who add a battery do it mainly for backup power, with better self-use as a bonus. Whether it makes sense for you depends on your goals, not on a sales pitch. Our battery guide walks through it honestly.

GOOD TO KNOW

A battery helps most where export credits are low — exactly Ohio's situation — because it lets you keep your own power instead of giving it away. Just go in knowing the main payoff is usually backup and resilience, not a fast financial return.

10 What Happens to Your Credits Over the Year

People often ask what happens to the credit for power they export — does it roll over, and do they ever get a check? The details vary by utility, but the general picture in Ohio is that exported power earns a credit at that low generation rate, and any unused credit typically carries on your account rather than arriving as a big payment.

What it almost never does is turn into a meaningful cash windfall. Because the export rate is so low, the credits are modest to begin with. This is one more reason the "sell

power back for income" idea does not hold up here — the mechanism simply is not built to pay you much. Your own utility's terms spell out exactly how your credits behave.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> Some utilities let small credits carry forward on your bill and may zero them out or settle them once a year at the low rate. Because the amounts are small under net billing, this detail rarely changes whether solar makes sense — but it is worth confirming in your utility's terms so there are no surprises.

11 A Worked Example — Use vs Export

Let us make the difference concrete with round numbers. Say your panels make 30 kilowatt-hours on a sunny day, you pay 16 cents to buy power, and your utility credits exports at 5 cents. Watch how much the timing of your usage changes the value.

1. If you use all 30 kWh yourself as you make it, you avoid buying 30 kWh at 16 cents — about $4.80 of value.
2. If you use none of it and export all 30 kWh at 5 cents, you earn about $1.50.
3. That is more than three times the value simply from using your own power instead of exporting it.
4. Then you still buy your evening power back at the full 16 cents either way.

Multiply that daily gap across a year and it is a large difference in what your solar is worth. This is the entire reason Ohio solar strategy is "use it, do not sell it" — and why a right-sized system you mostly consume beats an oversized one banking on exports.

> **TIP**
>
> You will not hit 100 percent self-use, and that is fine. The point is simply that every kilowatt-hour you shift into daytime use is worth several times more than the same kilowatt-hour exported. Small timing changes add up.

12 Reading Your Own Bill and Export Terms

You can confirm all of this yourself, which is the best protection against a misleading pitch. Your electric bill and your utility's website hold the two numbers that matter: what you pay per kilowatt-hour, and what you are credited for exports.

1. On your bill, add up the total you pay and divide by the kilowatt-hours used to get your real all-in rate.
2. On your utility's website, look for the solar, net metering, or "net energy" rider or tariff.
3. Find the stated credit for exported or excess generation, in cents per kilowatt-hour.
4. Compare the two numbers — the gap is how much more a used kWh is worth than an exported one.

> **TIP**
>
> If the tariff language is dense or you cannot find the export rate, that is normal — these documents are written for engineers. It is a good moment to ask for help rather than guess, so your plan rests on the real number.

Rather not do this yourself? I'll come to your home and set it up for you — a flat $99 first visit across Portage County, Ohio and nearby communities. Outside the area? I also help remotely by phone or screen-share. Book at billshometech.com/book or call (330) 200-8042.

13 Find Your Export Rate on Your Own Bill

The single number that decides how much your exported power is worth is buried on your electric bill, and most people have never looked for it. It is worth finding, because it turns this whole topic from theory into your real dollars. You are looking for what you are credited for power you send back, versus what you pay to buy power.

1. Pull up a recent electric bill, on paper or from your utility's website.
2. Find the rate you pay to buy power — the "price to compare" or supply-plus-delivery rate, often around 14 to 17 cents per kilowatt-hour all-in.
3. Look for any line about exported, returned, or net-metered energy, and the credit rate attached to it.
4. If you are not solar yet, that export line will not appear — call the utility and ask what they credit for exported generation.
5. Compare the two. In Ohio the export credit is usually far below the retail rate, and that gap is the heart of this guide.

> **WATCH OUT**
>
> Do not assume the credit equals the retail rate. Older articles and out-of-state salespeople describe one-for-one credit, but Ohio works differently, and the exact figure varies by utility and by whether you buy power from the utility or a separate supplier. Confirm yours in writing before you size a system around selling power back.

14 What to Ask When You Call Your Utility

Because the rules differ between AEP Ohio, the FirstEnergy companies, Duke, and others — and can change — a five-minute phone call to your own utility is worth more than any general article. Have your account number handy and ask these plainly.

- "If I install solar, exactly how do you credit the power I send back — at what rate per kilowatt-hour?"
- "Is that credit the full retail rate, or only the generation part of my rate?"
- "Do leftover credits carry month to month, and what happens to any left at year's end?"
- "Does it matter whether I buy my power from you or from a separate supplier?"
- "Is there a size limit on a home system to qualify for this credit?"

TIP

Ask them to email or mail you the answer, or point you to the exact tariff page. A number you can read for yourself beats one a salesperson repeats, and you can hand it to anyone helping you check a quote.

15 A Day in the Life of Your Solar

Because Ohio pays you little for exported power, the money follows a simple rule: the more of your own solar you use as you make it, the better you do. Picturing a single sunny day makes this clear. Your panels make the most around midday, which is often when a quiet house uses the least.

Time of day	What the panels are doing	Smart move
Early morning	Little output yet	Hold heavy chores for later
Late morning to mid-afternoon	Peak output	Run the dishwasher, laundry, charge devices, pre-cool the house
Dinnertime	Output fading fast	Expect to pull from the grid as the sun drops
Evening and night	No output	All power comes from the grid unless you have a battery

You do not have to live by a stopwatch. Simply nudging the biggest daytime-flexible chores — laundry, dishwasher, running the air conditioner a bit harder at noon so it coasts in the evening — into the bright hours turns power you would have exported for pennies into power you would have bought at full price.

GOOD TO KNOW

This is also why a battery can help in Ohio even though exports pay little: it stores your midday surplus for the evening instead of selling it back cheaply. Whether that is worth its cost is a separate question, covered in the battery guide.

16 Words You'll Hear

The vocabulary around buying and selling power is small once it is translated. Keep this handy when you read your bill or a quote.

Term	What it really means
Net metering	Older, generous rule: exported power credited at the full retail price. Largely not how Ohio works now.
Net billing	Ohio's approach: you buy power at retail but are credited for exports at a lower rate.
Self-consumption	The share of your solar you use yourself instead of exporting — the part that saves you the most.
Export / generation rate	The lower price your utility credits for power you send back to the grid.
Price to compare	The rate on your bill that shows what you pay per kilowatt-hour to buy power.
True-up	A periodic settling of credits and charges, sometimes yearly.

GOOD TO KNOW

If a quote's savings depend on "net metering," ask the seller to confirm in writing that your Ohio utility actually credits exports at the retail rate. In most cases it does not, and that single word can hide a big difference in your real savings.

17 Questions People Ask Us

The questions Bill hears most about selling power back in Ohio, answered plainly.

Can I make money selling power to the electric company?

Rarely, and that is the key point. Because exports are credited at a low rate, oversizing a system to sell power back almost never pays. Size it to power you use, not to sell.

Do my credits ever expire?

That depends on your utility's rules, which is exactly why the phone call in this guide matters. Some carry month to month; some settle up yearly. Get yours in writing.

Is a battery the answer to the low export rate?

It can help you use more of your own power, but batteries are expensive, and whether they pay off is its own calculation. Do not let a low export rate stampede you into a battery without running those numbers.

Could Ohio's rules change again?

They could — these rules are reviewed periodically and are sometimes disputed. Decide based on today's confirmed rate for your utility, and do not sign anything that only works if the rules improve.

GOOD TO KNOW

If your bill is confusing or a quote leans on "net metering," that is a good moment for a neutral read. Bill can look at your actual bill and usage pattern with you, with nothing to sell.

18 When to Call Bill

Ohio's net billing is the single most misunderstood part of going solar here, and it is the thing sales pitches most often gloss over or get wrong. You do not have to decode utility tariffs on your own. Bill has no stake in whether you buy, so his read on your numbers is a straight one.

- A pitch is built on "selling power back" and you want to know what your exports are really worth.
- You cannot find or understand your utility's current export rate.
- You are being sold a system larger than your usage and want to know if that makes sense in Ohio.
- You want help setting up simple daytime habits to use more of your own solar.
- You just want an honest, independent read before you commit.

Call Bill at (330) 200-8042. He will help you find your utility's real export terms, compare them to what you pay, and size your thinking around Ohio's actual rules — not an out-of-state sales script.

CHEAT SHEET

Everyday Cheat Sheet

Keep this handy. In Ohio, a kilowatt-hour used is worth far more than one sold back.

I want to...	Do this...
Know Ohio's rule	Most customers have net billing — exports earn a low rate, not full retail
Find your two numbers	Your retail price to buy vs your credit to export (cents per kWh)
Get the real export rate	Check your utility's net-metering/net-energy tariff or a recent bill
Spot a bad pitch	Be wary of "size big and sell power back" — exports barely pay here
Keep more of your solar	Run big appliances and charging during sunny midday hours
Decide on a battery	It helps capture value where exports are low — but mainly pays off as backup
Get help	Call Bill: (330) 200-8042

BEFORE YOU GO

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 results.

HOW I CAN HELP

Your Visit — and My Promise

You don't have to remember all of it — just that a friendly, patient person is one call away, whenever you'd rather have a hand.

KEY SPECS

In your home — $99 flat for the first visit, no contracts and no surprises, with a 30-day come-back-free follow-up. In-home visits cover Portage County, Ohio and nearby communities.
Outside the area? Remotely — $49 for a screen-share session (free for Support Plan members, $39/mo), refundable if I can't fix it — and credited toward a visit if you'd rather have me in person. Book either at billshometech.com/book.

GOOD TO KNOW

My promise — If you're not 100% satisfied with your visit, I'll come back at no charge, or refund the full $99. No questions, no awkwardness. That's how I'd want to be treated.

Whenever you're ready, I'll come to your home anywhere in Portage County, Ohio and nearby communities, at your pace. Too far for a house call? I also help remotely. Book at billshometech.com/book or call (330) 200-8042. — Bill

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