



An Extended Guide · No. 1541

Your Roof-Solar Game Plan

Turning all of this into
confident next steps

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! Read this first — this is professional, on-the-roof work

Putting solar on a roof is expert, permitted work — not a weekend project. It means drilling into your roof and sealing every hole against water for decades, or setting heavy ballast your roof has to carry, all while working at a height where a fall can be deadly and around wiring that is live whenever the sun is up. This guide is here to help you understand and judge that work — so you can hire the right people and ask good questions — not to walk you up a ladder to do it yourself. For any roof-mounted system, use a licensed, insured, properly credentialed solar installer, make sure the required permit and inspection actually happen, and protect your roof's warranty before the first hole is drilled. And please don't climb up to inspect or adjust anything yourself — the roof is their job, not yours. Use this guide as your calm, step-by-step plan for moving forward — it's about deciding and hiring well, never about doing any of the roof work yourself.

You've learned enough. Here's how it all fits together

This last guide isn't about anything new. It's about taking everything from this set and turning it into a plain, step-by-step plan you can actually follow — at your own pace, with no pressure.

I'm Bill, and I run Bill's Home Tech here in Portage County, Ohio. I wrote this whole series because roof-mounted solar involves a lot of moving parts — the roof, the structure, the wiring, the paperwork — and it's easy to feel like you need to become an expert just to have a conversation with an installer.

You don't. You need a sensible order to do things in, and enough understanding to ask good questions and recognize good answers. That's what this guide lays out, start to finish.

Read it once through if you're just getting started, or skip straight to wherever you are in the process. Either way, you can come back to it as many times as you need.

★ You don't have to do this alone

That's really the whole message of this guide. I'm glad to be your plain-spoken second opinion at any step along the way, with no stake in the sale. Call or text me anytime at (330) 200-8042.

The whole plan, on one page

If you read nothing else in this guide, read this list. It's the entire journey, in order.

- ❑ Learn the basics first — what the mounting system is and how it works, in plain English.
- ❑ Evaluate your own roof honestly — its direction, its shade, its age, and its structure.
- ❑ Sort out the roof's timing — if it's aging, plan to re-roof before solar goes on, not after.
- ❑ Get multiple, written quotes, and compare them side by side.
- ❑ Vet each installer carefully — licensed, insured, credentialed, with real references and a written warranty.
- ❑ Confirm permits, a structural review where it applies, and your roof warranty, before the first hole is drilled.
- ❑ Decide on your own timeline, with no pressure from anyone.
- ❑ Ask for help at any point along the way — you don't have to sort this out alone.

✓ This order matters more than the speed

There's no prize for moving fast. Moving through these steps in order — understanding before evaluating, evaluating before quoting — is what keeps the whole project calm.

Step one: learn the basics

This is the step you may have already done, simply by reading this series. It's worth naming as its own deliberate step.

Before you talk to a single installer, it helps enormously to understand what racking actually is, how it fastens to your roof, why flashing matters so much, and why this is professional, permitted work rather than a weekend project. Our guide on how roof racking works is the natural place to start.

You don't need to read every guide in this set cover to cover. Skim the ones that match your situation — your roof type, your questions, your worries — and treat the rest as a reference shelf you can come back to.

✓ Read in whatever order makes sense to you

Some folks read straight through. Others jump straight to their roof type or their biggest worry. Both are the right way to use this series.

Step two: evaluate your roof honestly — direction and shade

This is where the plan gets personal. It's time to look at your own roof with fresh, honest eyes.

Which way does your roof face. South-facing gets the most sun; east and west work with some loss; north-facing is a poor choice. Then look at shade — mature trees, a chimney, a dormer, even a neighbor's roofline can all matter more than people expect.

Our guide on roof direction and tilt walks through this in full, and our guide on evaluating your roof as a candidate ties direction, shade, age, and structure together into one honest first look.

✓ Walk your own property at different times of day

You don't need special tools for this first pass — just some honest observation of where the sun falls, and when, across your roof.

Step two, continued: age and structure

Two questions matter as much as sun exposure: how old is the roof, and can it carry the weight.

Solar panels last a long time — long enough that a roof nearing the end of its own life is worth re-roofing before, not after, panels go on. Our guide on roof age and condition walks through that trade-off plainly.

Whether your roof's structure — its rafters or trusses — can carry the added weight is a separate, equally honest question, one a qualified installer answers by actually looking, not guessing. Our guide on whether your roof can carry solar covers this in depth.

★ An honest look, not a scare

Plenty of ordinary roofs handle solar just fine. The goal here is simply making sure someone qualified actually checks, rather than assuming.

Step two, continued: know your roof type

The single biggest factor in how your racking works is what your roof is actually made of.

Asphalt shingle, metal, tile, and flat or low-slope roofs each mount their own way, with their own considerations — we cover each one in its own guide in this series, so you can go deep on the roof you actually have instead of a general one.

Once you know your roof type, our flashing guide and our rails, clamps, and attachments guide round out the picture — together they cover almost everything an installer's mounting plan will touch on.

✓ Start with the guide that matches your roof

If you only read one or two roof-type guides in this series, make them the ones that match what's actually over your head.

Step three: sort out the roof's timing

This step trips people up more than almost any other, and it's simple once you name it directly.

If your roof is getting on in years, the honest move is to re-roof first, before solar goes on. Otherwise you may end up paying, later, to have the panels removed and reinstalled just to redo the roof underneath them — a real hassle that's easy to avoid with a little upfront planning.

Our guide on roof age and condition, and our guide on re-roofing with panels installed, both cover this trade-off — read whichever matches where you are: deciding on timing, or already facing a re-roof with panels in place.

! When in doubt, roof first

If you're genuinely unsure whether your roof has enough life left, lean toward addressing the roof before solar goes on. It's far simpler than doing it in the other order.

Step four: get multiple, written quotes

Once you understand your own roof, you're ready to talk to installers — more than one of them.

- **Get it in writing.** A serious quote is a written, itemized proposal, not a verbal estimate on the driveway.
- **Compare more than the bottom line.** Look at the proposed mounting approach, the timeline, and how clearly it's explained.
- **Ask each one the same questions.** That's the only way to compare answers fairly across companies.
- **For exact costs, ask your installer.** I never guess at solar or roofing prices, and neither should you settle for a vague one.

✓ Multiple quotes protect you twice over

They help you find a fair proposal, and they help you spot an outlier — unusually low, unusually pushy, or unusually vague — before you commit to anything.

Step five: vet your installer carefully

This is the single highest-leverage step in the whole plan. The right installer makes every other step easier.

- **Licensed, insured, and bonded.** Ask to see it, not just hear it.
- **NABCEP certification.** The recognized credential to look for in a solar installer.
- **Real local references.** Ask for them, and actually follow up.
- **A workmanship warranty, in writing,** with its length spelled out plainly.

Our guide on choosing a roof-mount solar installer goes through all of this in much more depth, including the sales tactics worth being wary of.

! High pressure is always a red flag

Door-to-door pitches, 'today-only' pricing, and pressure to sign on the spot are warning signs, not urgency. A good installer never needs to rush you.

Two kinds of homes, two sets of needs

This game plan works the same way for everyone, but a couple of steps look a little different depending on where you live.

If you live in town or the suburbs

In town or the suburbs, your plan usually centers on one roof — the house itself. Evaluating direction, shade, age, and structure is a more contained exercise, and quotes and wiring stay fairly straightforward.

- One roof to evaluate means step two of this plan goes a little faster — just be thorough about it.
- An HOA, if you have one, is worth checking early, before you fall for a particular layout.
- Shade from a neighbor's tree or your own chimney is often the deciding factor — walk your roof at different times of day.
- Multiple quotes are just as important here — a compact roof doesn't mean a compact decision.

If you are out in the country on a well

Out in the country, your plan may include more than one candidate roof — the house, plus a barn, shop, or pole building — and a couple of extra questions worth adding to your evaluation.

- Compare every candidate roof honestly, including a barn or pole building — our guide on barns and outbuildings covers what's different about them.
- Pole and post-frame structure needs its own verification, separate from a house's rafters.
- Longer wire runs from a distant building are worth asking installers about directly during the quoting step.
- If keeping a well pump or outbuildings powered matters to you, say so early — it can shape the whole plan.

★ One roof or several, the plan still works

Whether you're comparing a single house roof or a whole property full of options, the same seven steps apply. I'm glad to help you work through yours. Call (330) 200-8042.

Step six: confirm permits and a structural review

Once you've chosen an installer, this is where you make sure the paperwork side is real, not just promised.

Ask directly who pulls the permits — typically a building permit and an electrical permit — and whether a structural review is part of the plan. Our guide on permits, inspections, and interconnection, and our guide on whether your roof can carry solar, both cover what to expect.

An installer who wants to skip any of this, to save time or money, is telling you something important about how they work — listen to it.

! No permit is never a shortcut worth taking

Unpermitted roof and electrical work can cause real trouble later, with an insurance claim or a home sale. Treat a proposal to skip permits as a firm no.

Step six, continued: protect your roof's warranty

This is the detail that's easy to overlook and genuinely costly to fix after the fact.

Ask, before the first hole is drilled, how the install will affect your roofing material warranty and any roofer's workmanship warranty, and get the solar installer's own workmanship warranty in writing too. Our guide on solar and your roof warranty walks through exactly how to ask and what a good answer sounds like.

★ Ask before, not after

Getting the warranty question answered in writing up front is exactly the kind of homework I help families do. I'm glad to walk through it with you. (330) 200-8042.

Step six, continued: coordinate your pros

A roof-mount solar project usually involves more than one kind of professional, and someone needs to make sure they're talking to each other.

Your roofer, your solar installer, and a licensed electrician may all touch this project at some point. Our guide on coordinating your roofer, installer, and electrician explains who typically does what, and in what order, so nothing falls through the cracks between them.

You don't have to manage this coordination yourself — a good installer takes the lead on it. Your job is to ask who's responsible for making sure everyone's on the same page.

✓ One clear point of contact helps

Ask your installer who your main point of contact is throughout the project. A clear answer is a good sign.

Understand the safety basics before you decide

You don't need to master any of this. You just need to recognize it when a good installer explains it well.

Rooftop solar wiring is energized whenever it's daylight, which is why the electrical code requires a way to quickly shut it down — commonly called rapid shutdown — for the safety of firefighters and electricians. Model fire and building codes also require clear pathways and setbacks on the roof. Our guides on rapid shutdown and on fire code and roof pathways cover both in plain terms.

! None of this is DIY territory, ever

Height, structure, waterproofing, and live rooftop wiring make this professional, permitted work from start to finish. Every step in this plan is about understanding and choosing well — never about climbing up and doing any of it yourself.

Step seven: decide, with no pressure

This is the step where everything you've learned and gathered finally turns into a decision — on your own timeline.

- You've learned the basics and evaluated your roof honestly.
- You've compared multiple, written quotes.
- You've vetted your installer's licensing, credentials, and references.
- You've confirmed permits, a structural review, and your roof warranty in writing.

If all of that checks out and you feel comfortable, that's your green light. If something still feels unclear, it's entirely reasonable to slow down and ask more questions before you sign anything.

★ Nobody should be rushing you at this point

A trustworthy installer wants you to feel confident, not cornered. If you're feeling rushed, that's worth pausing on.

What to watch for after the install

The plan doesn't end when the panels go up. A little ongoing awareness keeps things running smoothly for years.

Watch for the ground-level warning signs covered in our common roof-mount problems guide — ceiling stains, lifted flashing, a production drop, birds underneath, rattling, or roof streaking — and report anything you notice to your installer rather than climbing up to check.

Our cleaning, maintenance, and safe roof access guide, and our critter guard guide, round out the picture for the occasional, low-effort upkeep a roof mount actually needs.

✓ A little familiarity goes a long way

You don't need a maintenance schedule. You just need to notice when something looks or sounds different than usual, and know who to call.

A quick index: which guide answers what

A short map back to the rest of the series, grouped by the kind of question you might have.

If you're wondering about...	See our guide on...
How the mounting system works	How roof racking works
Whether your roof qualifies at all	Evaluating your roof as a candidate
Your specific roof type	Shingle, metal, tile, and flat roofs
Waterproofing and hardware	Flashing, and rails and clamps
How it's held down	Penetrating vs. ballasted mounts
Whether it can carry the weight	Structural load and roof age
Sun, tilt, and Ohio weather	Orientation, and snow and wind load
Roof-level safety rules	Fire code and rapid shutdown
Pests and simple upkeep	Critter guards and maintenance
Protecting your roof, hiring right	Roof warranty and choosing an installer
Paperwork and a future re-roof	Permits, and re-roofing with panels on
If something seems off, or you're rural	Common problems, and barns and outbuildings

★ Or just ask me directly

If you'd rather skip the searching and just tell me your question, that's what I'm here for. (330) 200-8042.

A ground-level checklist for the whole journey

Print this page, or just keep it in mind, as you move through your own project.

- ☐ I understand what racking is and roughly how it attaches to a roof.
- ☐ I've honestly evaluated my roof's direction, shade, age, and structure.
- ☐ I know whether my roof needs attention before solar goes on.
- ☐ I have more than one written, itemized quote to compare.
- ☐ I've confirmed my installer is licensed, insured, and NABCEP-certified, with real references.
- ☐ I've confirmed permits, a structural review where needed, and my roof warranty, all in writing.
- ☐ I feel informed and unrushed — ready to decide on my own timeline.

✓ Missing a box isn't a failure

If you can't check every box yet, that's simply where to focus next — not a sign you're behind.

Questions worth asking yourself before you sign

A few honest, personal questions — not about the installer this time, but about you and your home.

Q: Do I actually understand what's being proposed for my roof?

If you can't explain it back in plain language, ask the installer to walk through it again. A good one will, gladly.

Q: Have I compared more than one quote?

If not, it's worth slowing down to get another before you commit to anything.

Q: Do I know what happens to my roof warranty?

If you haven't asked, or don't have the answer in writing, that's worth resolving before, not after, work begins.

Q: Do I feel rushed, or do I feel informed?

Feeling informed and unhurried is the goal of this entire guide. If you feel rushed instead, trust that feeling.

★ Talk it through with me before you sign

A second opinion before you commit costs you nothing but a conversation. Call or text (330) 200-8042.

Common Questions

The questions I hear most often about putting the whole plan into action, answered plainly.

Q: Do I really need to read the whole series before I start?

No. Skim what matches your situation and treat the rest as a reference. This wrap-up guide is meant to work on its own.

Q: What's the very first thing I should actually do?

Take an honest look at your own roof — direction, shade, age, and structure — before you talk to any installer.

Q: How many quotes are enough?

More than one, always. Comparing written, itemized proposals side by side is how you spot a fair deal and a red flag alike.

Q: What if two installers tell me different things?

That's a normal part of getting multiple opinions. Ask each one to explain their reasoning in plain terms, and feel free to bring the disagreement to me to help sort through.

Q: Is there a wrong order to do all this in?

The main thing to avoid is signing with an installer before you've evaluated your roof and compared quotes. Everything else can flex a little.

Q: What do you get out of helping with this?

Just the visit itself — I sell no solar equipment and earn no commission from any installer. My only interest is that you make a decision you feel good about.

★ Still have a question I didn't cover?

Call or text me at (330) 200-8042 and ask — there's no such thing as a silly question about your own home.

Bringing it all together

Seven steps, taken in order, turn an overwhelming decision into a manageable one: learn, evaluate, sort timing, quote, vet, confirm, decide.

None of it requires you to become an expert, and none of it requires you to climb a roof or do any of the work yourself. It just requires understanding enough to ask good questions, recognize good answers, and move at a pace that feels right to you.

Whichever step you're on right now, you don't have to figure it out alone. That's true whether you're just starting to learn or holding a stack of quotes and trying to decide.

★ I'm your plain-spoken second opinion

No stake in the sale, no pressure, no jargon — just honest help making sense of a big decision. Call or text me anytime at (330) 200-8042.

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 putting together your own roof-solar game plan 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 climb on roofs or do the licensed solar, roofing, or electrical work myself — for that I'll help you line up a trustworthy, properly credentialed local pro.

★ 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

Your Roof-Solar Game Plan

From learning the basics to deciding with confidence



Every step is about understanding and choosing well, never DIY.

Evaluating Your Roof, Honestly

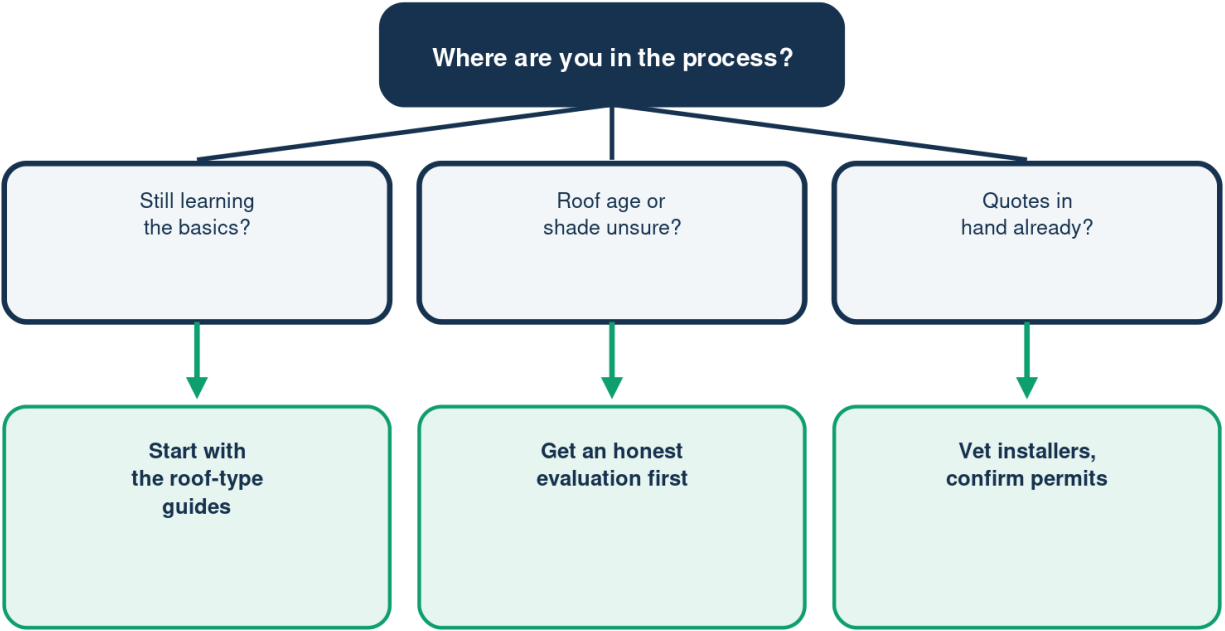
The short list every good evaluation starts with

What to look at	
Direction	Sun exposure
Shade	Trees, chimneys, more
Age	Remaining roof life
Structure	Rafters or trusses

Your installer confirms the details -- this is your honest starting point.

Ready for the Next Step?

Wherever you are, here's a sensible next move



No pressure -- a good installer welcomes questions and time to decide.

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

Signs of a Good Fit at Each Step

What you want to see as you move through the process

Sign of a good fit	
Quotes	Written and itemized
Installer	Licensed and insured
Paperwork	Permits and inspections
Warranty	Given to you in writing

None of this is a guess -- ask directly and expect clear answers.



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.

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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*



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