



An Extended Guide · No. 1527

# Roof Age and Condition

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Should you re-roof  
before you go solar?

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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. In this guide we're looking at the roof itself, before the panels ever go on — because the best time to think about your roof's age is before the first bracket goes in, not after.

## Let's talk about your roof's age, first

Solar panels and the racking that holds them are built to sit on your roof for a long time. So before anyone talks hardware, it's worth asking an honest question: does your roof have enough life left to go the distance with them?

I'm Bill, and I run Bill's Home Tech here in Portage County, Ohio. I help older adults and busy families make sense of home technology decisions without the sales pressure or the jargon. Timing solar against your roof's age is one of the most overlooked questions in the whole process, and it can save you real money and hassle down the road.

This guide walks through why roof age matters, how to get an honest read on your roof's condition, and why re-roofing first is usually the smarter order when a roof is already showing its age.

**★ No crystal ball required**

You don't need to predict the future — you just need an honest look at where your roof stands today. I'm glad to help you make sense of what a roofer or installer tells you. Call or text (330) 200-8042.

## The whole guide, on one page

If you remember only these things, you will be ahead of most homeowners who add solar without ever asking this question.

- ❑ Solar panels and racking are built to last a long time on your roof, so your roof needs long life left too.
- ❑ Best practice is simple: if your roof is nearing the end of its life, re-roof before adding solar, not after.
- ❑ Skipping that step usually means paying later to remove and reinstall ("R&R") the panels when the roof finally needs replacing.
- ❑ You can gauge your roof's age and condition from records you may already have, plus an honest inspection by a roofer.
- ❑ Metal roofs generally hold up longer than asphalt shingle roofs, though every roof still needs its own honest look.
- ❑ This is a decision for you, your roofer, and your solar installer together — never a guess from the driveway.

### ✓ There's no single right answer

There's a real range where either order can make sense. The point isn't to panic — it's to ask the question before you sign anything.

## Why your roof's age deserves a hard look first

It comes down to matching two timelines: how long your roof has left, and how long the solar system on top of it is built to last.

Solar panels and racking are designed to stay put and keep working for decades. That's a good thing — until the roof underneath them gives out first. A roof that's already aging when the panels go on may not make it to the system's own finish line.

When that happens, the roof still has to be replaced. The difference is that now there's a solar array sitting on top of it, and someone has to pay to take it off and put it back on so the roofer can do the job underneath.

None of this means your roof has to be brand new. It means the question — "how much life does this roof realistically have left?" — deserves an honest answer before you sign a solar contract, not after.

### ✓ A simple test to ask

"Would this roof reasonably be expected to outlast the solar system going on top of it?"  
If nobody can answer that with confidence, that's worth resolving first.

## Not all roofing ages the same way

The material your roof is made of shapes how it wears — and it's a useful starting point, even though it's never the whole story.

### Asphalt shingle roofs

The most common roofing material by far. Over time, asphalt shingles can show granule loss, curling edges, or cracking — ordinary signs of wear that a roofer knows how to read. Our asphalt-shingle guide covers how solar mounts on this roof type specifically.

### Metal roofs

As a general pattern, metal roofing tends to hold up longer than asphalt shingle roofing. That's a real point in its favor, though it doesn't mean a metal roof is automatically ready for solar — age and condition still deserve their own honest look. Our metal-roof guide covers how cleanly solar can mount on metal.

### Every roof is still its own case

Material is only part of the picture. Sun exposure, attic ventilation, prior repairs, and plain luck all play a role too. Think of the roofing material as a starting clue, not a final answer.

#### **! Don't let a quote skip this question**

An installer who measures your roof for panels but never asks about its age or condition is skipping a question that matters. A good one will ask before they ever propose a layout.

## How to get an honest read on your roof

You likely have more information on hand than you think — and the rest comes from a professional look, not a guess.

- **Records you may already have.** The original roofing invoice or permit, paperwork from when you bought the home, or a seller's disclosure that names the roof's age.
- **A past home inspection report.** If you have one from your purchase, it often notes the roofing material and its condition at the time.
- **A roofer's inspection.** The most reliable source of all — someone trained to look closely and tell you honestly where your roof stands today.
- **Your solar installer's own eyes.** A good one asks about roof age and condition as part of the proposal, not as an afterthought.

### ★ I can help you pull this together

Digging up old paperwork and making sense of what a roofer reports is exactly the kind of thing I help families with. Call or text (330) 200-8042.

## What a roofer actually checks

A roof inspection isn't a guess from the curb — it's a trained, close-up look most homeowners never get to see for themselves.

A roofer's inspection generally covers the condition of the roofing material itself, the flashing around chimneys and vents, signs of wear or damage, and any soft spots or trouble areas in the decking underneath. It gives you a much clearer picture than anything visible from the ground.

Because it's a close-up, hands-on look at a sloped surface high off the ground, it's work for someone trained and equipped to be up there safely — not a homeowner with a ladder and a Saturday afternoon.

### **! Leave the climbing to the roofer**

Please don't get on your own roof to check its condition, before or after solar. A trained, insured roofer has the training and equipment to do it safely. This guide is here to help you understand what they find, never to send you up there yourself.

## What happens if the roof gives out after solar goes on

Skip the roof-age question, and there's a well-known, avoidable consequence waiting down the road.

If a roof needs replacing after solar is already installed, the panels do not simply stay put while the roofer works underneath them. They have to come off, the roof gets redone, and then the panels go back on — a process known in the trade as remove and reinstall, or "R&R."

R&R is coordinated between your roofer and your solar company, and it adds real cost and scheduling that a straightforward re-roof or a straightforward solar install never needed on its own.

None of that is a disaster — it's a normal, well-understood part of owning solar long enough. But it's entirely avoidable when the roof's condition gets an honest look before the first hole is drilled.

### ✓ There's a guide just for this

If you're already in this situation, our guide on re-roofing with solar panels installed walks through how the R&R process actually works, step by step.

## Why "re-roof first" is the advice you'll hear most

When a roof is already aging, re-roofing before adding solar isn't caution for caution's sake — it's usually the cheaper, simpler path.

A little more coordination up front — getting the roof redone before the solar installer ever shows up — avoids the cost and hassle of an R&R later. It also means your new roof and your new solar system start their working lives together, on the same timeline.

The alternative — installing solar now and hoping the roof holds on — can work out fine on a roof with plenty of life left. But it's a real gamble on a roof that's already showing its age, and it's a gamble you don't have to take.

### **! A roof near the end of its life is the wrong roof for this**

Please don't mount a system built to last for decades on a roof that won't be around to see it through. If your roof is near the end of its life, re-roofing first is the responsible order.

## Re-roof first, or solar first — one decision, two paths

Both orders are legitimate. The roof's actual condition is what decides which one fits you.

Re-roofing first makes the most sense when a roofer's honest look shows real wear or limited remaining life. You get a clean start, and you never have to think about R&R at all.

Installing solar first can make just as much sense when the roof is genuinely sound, with real life left, and your roofer and installer both agree. The deciding factor is the roof's condition — not convenience, and not simply whichever crew you found first.

### ✓ Bring both pros into one conversation

Our guide on coordinating your roofer, installer, and electrician talks through getting everyone on the same page early, instead of finding out too late that they disagree.

## Two kinds of homes, two sets of needs

Figuring out your roof's age and condition looks a little different depending on where you live and how many roofs you're working with.

### If you live in town or the suburbs

In town and the suburbs, there's usually one roof to think about — the house itself. That simplicity makes the records-and-inspection approach fairly direct, especially in a neighborhood with a known build year.

- A single house roof keeps the question focused — age, condition, and one honest inspection.
- Municipal permit records or a subdivision's known build year can help fill in a roof's history.
- A prior owner's disclosure, if you have one, is worth digging out before you call a roofer.
- With one roof to plan around, timing a re-roof against a solar install is usually a simpler conversation.

### If you are out in the country on a well

Out in the country, there are often several roofs in the mix — the house, plus a barn, a pole building, or a garage — and they rarely share the same age or history. A rural home on a well has its own extra reason to want the timing right.

- A barn or outbuilding roof may be older or newer than the house — each one needs its own honest look, not an assumption.
- Records for outbuildings are often thinner than for the house, so a roofer's inspection carries even more weight.
- If your water comes from a well, keeping power reliable matters more, which makes avoiding an unplanned R&R worth extra care.
- Choosing which roof hosts the array can hinge on which one has the most life left, not just which one is biggest.

#### ★ Not sure which of your roofs to start with?

Whether it's the house or a barn, tell me what you've got and we'll think through the age question together. Call (330) 200-8042.

## Ground-level signs worth mentioning to a roofer

You don't have to diagnose your own roof — but noticing a few things from the ground gives a roofer a helpful head start.

Curling or missing shingles, granules collecting in the gutters, dark streaking or moss, or a roofline that looks like it's sagging are all worth mentioning when you call a roofer. You're not making a diagnosis — you're pointing at something worth a professional look.

The goal isn't to become your own inspector. It's to walk into that first conversation with a roofer able to say what you've noticed, so their visit starts from a more informed place.

### ★ An honest look, not a scare

Most of what you'll notice from the ground just means "worth a look," not "emergency." The point is a fair assessment, not a panic. Happy to talk through what you're seeing — (330) 200-8042.

## Two decades-long timelines, side by side

A solar system's long service life only pays off if the roof underneath it is built to go the same distance.

Solar panels and racking are designed to run for a long time, quietly doing their job through year after year of weather. That's the whole appeal of solar — but it only works out well when the roof carrying that system has comparable life left in it.

A mismatch between those two timelines — a long-lived system on a short-lived roof — is exactly what creates the R&R situation this guide has been describing. Lining them up is the whole point of asking the age question early.

### ✓ Ask your installer this exact question

"Based on what you can see, does this roof have enough life left to outlast the system you're proposing?" A good installer will engage with that question honestly, not brush past it.

## A few general patterns by roof material

Material is a useful starting point for thinking about age — just remember it's a clue, not a verdict.

| Roof type                                 | General age consideration                                                             |
|-------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Asphalt shingle                           | Most common material — watch for granule loss, curling, and cracking as signs of age. |
| Metal (standing seam or exposed-fastener) | Generally holds up longer than asphalt, though condition still deserves its own look. |
| Tile, flat/low-slope, or other            | Ages its own way — a roofer's honest inspection matters even more here.               |

✓ **See the guide for your roof type**

Our asphalt-shingle guide and our metal-roof guide both go deeper on how solar mounts on each — start with the one that matches your roof.

## Why your roofer and installer should talk to each other

When a roof's remaining life is borderline, getting both professionals talking before you sign anything heads off a lot of trouble.

A roofer and a solar installer can look at the same roof and reach different conclusions if they never compare notes. Looping both in early — ideally before a contract is signed — helps you get one consistent, honest answer instead of two conflicting opinions after the fact.

It also protects your roof's warranty. A roofer who knows solar is coming can flag concerns up front, rather than discovering after the fact that a warranty question was never asked.

### **! Skipping this conversation can cost you twice**

If the roofer isn't consulted and the roof later needs an unplanned R&R, disputes over responsibility and cost tend to follow. A short conversation up front is far cheaper than that.

## This is a judgment call for pros, not a guess from the driveway

A handful of factors go into the timing decision — all of them best judged by people trained to judge them.

- **The roof's remaining life.** A roofer's honest inspection, not a guess based on how the shingles look from the yard.
- **The solar system's long service life.** Built to run for decades, which is exactly why it needs a roof that can keep up.
- **The cost and hassle of a future R&R.** Real, and avoidable, if the roof is dealt with first when it needs it.
- **Your roof's warranty.** Protected by using a licensed, insured roofer and a properly credentialed solar installer, and by getting answers in writing.
- **The permit and inspection process.** Applies either way, regardless of which order you choose.

### ★ Where I fit in

I help you gather records, make sense of what a roofer or installer tells you, and weigh the timing — I don't climb up and diagnose your roof myself. That's a call away at (330) 200-8042.

## Permits and inspections don't change, either way

Whichever order you choose, the paperwork side of the job stays just as important.

A re-roof typically has its own permit and inspection, and a solar install has its own building and electrical permits and inspections too. Handling them thoughtfully, in a sensible sequence, can actually simplify scheduling rather than complicate it.

What doesn't change is the value of those permits and inspections: they're your assurance that both jobs were done to code, by people qualified to do them, whichever order they happened in.

### **! No permit is a red flag, on either job**

If a roofer or a solar installer offers to skip permits "to save time," treat it as a warning sign, not a convenience. Unpermitted work can cause real trouble at claim time or sale time.

## Your roof warranty and this timing decision

Getting the order right isn't just about avoiding an R&R — it's also about protecting the warranties you already have.

A roof already carries its own warranties — often a materials warranty and sometimes a roofer's workmanship warranty. Installing solar on an aging roof, or coordinating a later R&R poorly, can put those warranties at risk.

Working with installers your roofer recognizes, and getting warranty answers in writing before the first hole is drilled, keeps that protection intact no matter which order you choose.

### ★ Ask before, not after

Getting the warranty question answered in writing up front is exactly the kind of homework I help families do. Our roof-warranty guide digs in further — I'm glad to help you use it. (330) 200-8042.

## What a thoughtful age-and-condition conversation looks like

You won't inspect your own roof, but you can absolutely judge how seriously a professional takes this question.

- **They ask about roof age before quoting.** Not as an afterthought, but as one of the first questions.
- **They're willing to put findings in writing.** A verbal "it looks fine" isn't the same as a documented assessment.
- **They don't pressure you to skip a needed re-roof.** A rushed "let's just install it now" is worth a second opinion.
- **They coordinate with the other trade.** Roofer and installer willing to talk to each other, not just to you separately.
- **They explain R&R plainly if it applies.** No vague answers if you ask what happens down the road.

### ✓ Trust a straight answer

A professional who answers this question plainly, in writing, without rushing you, is telling you a lot about how the rest of the job will go.

## Questions worth asking about your roof's age

You don't need technical answers — you need a clear, honest conversation, and that itself tells you a lot.

### **Q: How old is my roof, and how did you determine that?**

A good answer points to records, a visible inspection, or both — not a guess based on how the roof looks from the driveway.

### **Q: Do you think this roof has enough life left to outlast the solar system?**

You want an honest opinion, even if it's not the answer that leads to a quick sale.

### **Q: If my roof needs replacing in a few years, what would that mean for me?**

Expect a plain explanation of the R&R process and a recommendation to get itemized quotes when the time comes, not a guessed price today.

### **Q: Will you put your assessment in writing?**

A written assessment is worth far more than a verbal reassurance, and a good professional won't hesitate to provide one.

#### **★ Bring the answers to me**

If what you hear leaves you unsure, that's a fine reason to call. I'll help you make sense of it, honestly and with no stake in the sale. (330) 200-8042.

## Common Questions

The questions about roof age and solar timing I hear most often, answered plainly.

**Q: How do I know how old my roof is if I don't have records?**

A roofer's inspection is your best next step. Between visible wear and their trained eye, they can usually give you a reasonably confident read even without paperwork.

**Q: Can't I just add solar now and deal with the roof later?**

You can, if the roof genuinely has real life left. If it's already aging, you're choosing to pay for an R&R later — worth doing with eyes open, not by accident.

**Q: Does re-roofing first cost more overall?**

It can mean more coordination up front, but it typically avoids the extra cost of a later R&R. For itemized costs, always ask your roofer and installer directly.

**Q: Is metal roofing a way to avoid this whole question?**

It helps — metal generally holds up longer than asphalt — but it doesn't eliminate the question. Every roof, metal included, still deserves its own honest look.

**Q: Who decides if my roof is ready — me, the roofer, or the installer?**

All three, together. You bring the records and the questions, and a licensed roofer and a properly credentialed installer bring the honest assessment.

**★ Still have a question I didn't cover?**

That's what I'm here for. 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

Matching your roof's remaining life to your solar system's long life is one simple question with a real payoff.

Solar panels and racking are built to last for decades. Whether that timeline actually works out well for you depends on how much life your roof has left — something you can gauge honestly through records and a roofer's inspection, long before any hardware shows up.

When a roof is aging, re-roofing first is almost always the simpler, less costly path. When it's sound, moving forward with solar can make just as much sense. Either way, it's a decision made with honest information, not a guess.

### ★ Let's figure out your roof's timing, together

Whether you're just starting to think about solar or already comparing quotes, I'm glad to be your patient, plain-spoken second opinion — no sales pressure, ever. Call or text (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 weighing your roof's age before adding solar 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.

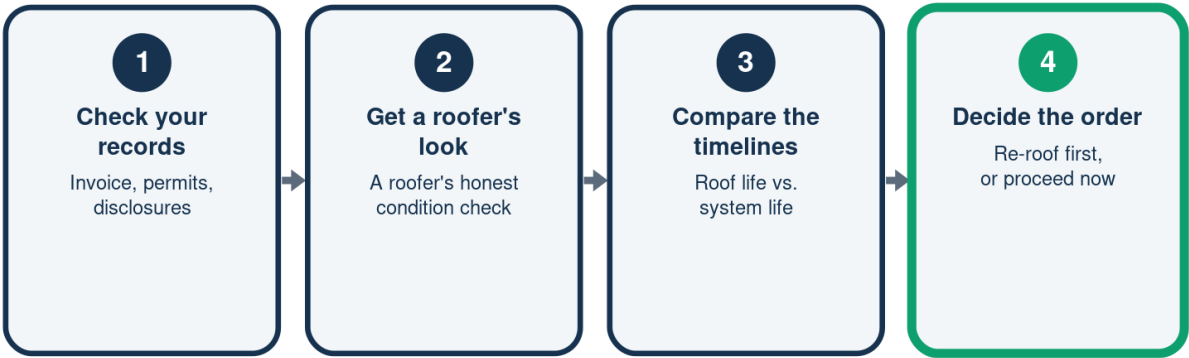
When you'd rather have a hand, that's exactly what I do. I come to your home, work at your pace, and never make you feel rushed or silly for asking. A first visit is a flat \$99, and for the parts that don't need me on-site I can often help right on your screen for \$49. Every visit comes with a 30-day,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

# Getting the Timing Right

Four steps before you decide



The goal is an honest match, not a guess.

## Roofing Materials Age Differently

A general pattern, not a guarantee

| General pattern |                     |
|-----------------|---------------------|
| Asphalt shingle | Most common choice  |
| Metal           | Often longer-lived  |
| Tile / other    | Varies -- ask a pro |

Material is a clue -- an inspection is the real answer.

## Two Orders of Operations

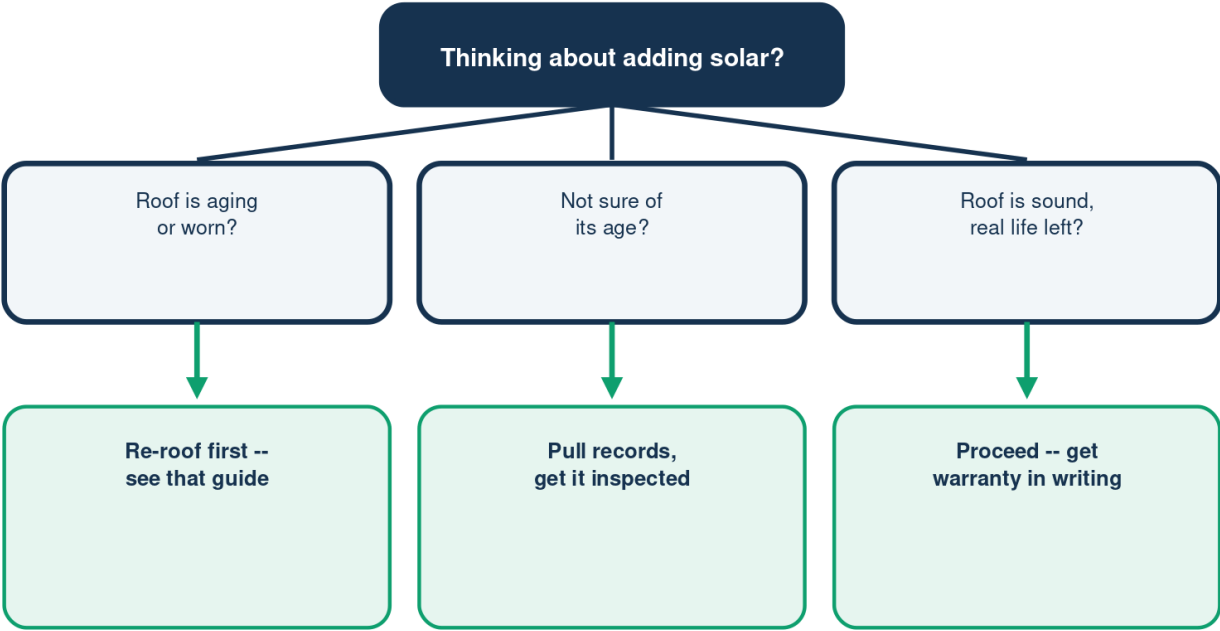
Which comes first: the roof or the panels?

|                   | Re-roof first | Solar first       |
|-------------------|---------------|-------------------|
| Best when         | Roof is aging | Real life left    |
| Later R&R needed? | No            | Only if roof ages |
| Coordination      | Roofer first  | Both together     |

Either order can work -- the roof's condition decides which.

# Is Your Roof Ready for Solar, Timing-Wise?

Three honest checks before you sign



When in doubt, get a roofer's opinion before you sign a solar contract.

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



## Need a Real Person?

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

### BILL'S PROMISE

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

**(330) 200-8042 · BillsHomeTech.com**

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

— Bill

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### 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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