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Tariffs and Panel Prices — Should You Wait or Buy Now?

The forces pushing solar prices around — and how to decide without trying to outguess the market

Plain-English solar help from:

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SUMMARY

The 60-Second Version

Should you buy solar now or wait? Nobody can promise the perfect time, so decide on what you control. Import tariffs on panels have been climbing through 2025 and 2026 with more expected, which nudges installed prices upward over time — a mild push toward buying sooner, though panels are only part of the total cost.

Technology slowly improves, which is a reason some people wait, but the strongest reasons to wait are your own: a roof that needs replacing first, finances that aren't ready, or a likely move before payback. Crucially, the 30 percent buyer tax credit is already gone with no known return, so timing around it — rushing to catch it or waiting for it to come back — makes no sense in 2026.

Avoid both the "buy now before prices explode" pressure and the "just keep waiting" drift; settle your roof and sizing, get real quotes on today's prices, and run honest payback. Bill has no stake in your timing and will decide it with you.

1 The Short Version

With prices in the air and the tax credit gone, many people are asking the natural question: should I buy solar now, or wait for a better moment? The honest answer is that nobody can promise you the perfect time, but you can make a clear-eyed decision by understanding what is actually pushing prices around. This guide lays out the forces calmly — tariffs, technology, and policy — so you can weigh waiting against buying for yourself.

The short of it: import tariffs on panels have been climbing and more are expected, which pushes prices up; technology slowly improves, which argues for patience; and the big tax credit that might have rewarded waiting is already gone and not known to be coming back. Bill does not sell solar and has no stake in your timing — this is simply the honest lay of the land.

- Tariffs on imported panels have been rising through 2025-2026, with more expected — a push toward higher prices.
- Technology slowly improves over time, which is a mild reason some people wait.
- There is no known tax credit returning for buyers, so waiting won't recapture that.
- There is no guaranteed "perfect time" — decide on your needs and honest current numbers.

WATCH OUT

Do not let either a "prices are about to skyrocket, buy now" pitch or a vague "just wait, it'll get cheaper" hope make your decision. Both are guesses about the future. Decide based on your roof, your usage, and the real numbers in front of you today.

2 Why This Question Is Hard

Timing any big purchase is genuinely difficult, because it means predicting the future, and nobody can do that reliably — not salespeople, not experts, not this guide. Prices depend on tariffs, trade decisions, manufacturing, and demand, all of which shift. So anyone who tells you with certainty that prices will jump next month, or surely fall, is guessing.

What you can do is understand the forces at work and their likely direction, then make a sensible decision for your own situation. That is far more useful than chasing a perfect moment that only becomes clear in hindsight. The goal of this guide is to replace guesswork and sales pressure with a calm understanding of the real pressures on price.

GOOD TO KNOW

"Wait or buy" has no universally right answer, because it depends on unknowable future prices and on your own circumstances. The best anyone can honestly do is understand the forces and decide thoughtfully — which beats both panic-buying and endless waiting.

3 What Tariffs Are, in Plain Terms

A tariff is a tax a country places on imported goods. When the United States puts tariffs on solar panels or the cells inside them coming from other countries, those panels cost more to bring in, and some of that added cost tends to flow through to the prices buyers pay. Many solar panels and components are imported, so tariffs on them matter for what you pay.

Tariffs are set and changed through government and trade decisions, which is why they move over time and are hard to predict. You do not need to follow the details, but the basic idea is simple: higher tariffs on imported panels generally push installed prices up, not down. That is the main reason tariffs enter the "wait or buy" question at all.

GOOD TO KNOW

Tariffs are one of several things rolled into the price you are quoted, alongside labor, overhead, and the rest of the equipment. So a tariff increase does not raise your total by its full headline percentage — panels are only part of the cost — but it does nudge installed prices upward over time.

4 Where Tariffs Stand as of Late 2026

As of late 2026, import tariffs on solar cells and panels have been rising over the past couple of years, and additional duties have been proposed or put in place affecting panels and cells from several countries. Industry analysts have generally expected these pressures to keep module prices climbing rather than falling. The specifics shift constantly, so treat this as direction, not a precise forecast.

Because the exact rates and which countries they cover keep changing, this guide deliberately avoids stating a specific future tariff as settled fact — that would likely be out of date by the time you read it. The durable takeaway is simply that tariffs have been climbing and more have been expected, which leans toward higher, not lower,

panel prices. Confirm current pricing through your own quotes.

WATCH OUT

Be skeptical of any salesperson quoting an exact future tariff or price jump as certain fact to rush you. Tariff rates change often and are genuinely uncertain. The honest statement is "tariffs have been rising and more are expected" — anyone claiming precise knowledge of next year's prices is overstating what is known.

5 The Case for Buying Now

There is a reasonable case for going ahead if the numbers work for you today. It rests mostly on the direction of prices and on simply starting your savings sooner rather than later.

- Tariffs have been climbing and more are expected, so panel prices may rise further.
- The 30 percent buyer tax credit is already gone, so waiting won't let you "catch" a better incentive.
- Every year you wait is a year without the bill savings a system would be producing.
- If your roof is ready and your usage is high, delay mostly just postpones the benefit.

None of this is a reason to rush past careful shopping — you should still get multiple quotes and never sign on the first visit. But if the economics make sense for your situation now, the forces on price do not clearly reward waiting, and starting sooner means saving sooner.

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6 The Case for Waiting

There is also a reasonable case for patience, and an honest guide gives it fairly. Waiting can make sense for reasons that have nothing to do with gambling on prices.

- Solar technology slowly improves — panels gradually get a bit more efficient over the years.
- If your roof needs replacing soon, waiting to reroof first is the right kind of waiting.
- If your finances aren't ready, forcing it now with a bad loan is worse than waiting.
- If you may move soon, waiting — or skipping — avoids a payback you'd never reach.
- Policy and local programs can change, occasionally for the better.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> Notice that the strongest reasons to wait are about your own situation — your roof, your money, your plans — not about betting on prices dropping. "Wait until my roof and finances are ready" is sound; "wait indefinitely hoping prices fall" is a gamble against the current direction of tariffs.

7 The Credit Is Gone Either Way

A crucial point cuts through much of the wait-or-buy noise: the 30 percent federal tax credit for buyers already ended at the end of 2025. So waiting cannot recapture it — it is gone whether you buy today or in two years — and there is no known replacement credit scheduled to return for buyers. This removes one of the biggest reasons people used to time a purchase.

It also means a salesperson's old line to "act now before the credit expires" is hollow in 2026, because it already expired. And a hopeful plan to "wait for the credit to come back" rests on something nobody can promise. On the tax-credit front, the situation is simply settled and the same no matter when you buy. We cover this fully in our tax-credit guide.

WATCH OUT

Do not base your timing on the tax credit in either direction. It is gone for buyers now, and no return is known or promised. Any pitch or plan built on the credit — rushing to catch it or waiting for its return — is built on something that does not exist for a 2026 buyer.

8 What Actually Should Drive Your Timing

With the credit off the table and tariffs leaning prices upward, the things that should truly drive your timing are mostly about you, not about predicting the market. These are the questions worth answering before you decide to buy now or hold off.

1. Is my roof ready, with plenty of life left — or should I reroof first?
2. Are my finances in shape to pay cash or get a fair loan, without a bad high-interest deal?
3. Do I plan to stay in this home long enough to reach payback?
4. Do the honest current numbers — a real quote on today's prices — make sense for me?
5. Am I deciding calmly, or being rushed by a manufactured deadline?

If those answers line up — a ready roof, sound finances, a long stay, numbers that work — then the moment is reasonable, and waiting mostly postpones the benefit. If they do not line up, that is a far better reason to wait than any guess about next year's prices.

9 How to Decide Without Guessing the Market

You can make a confident decision without pretending to predict prices, by focusing on what you control and treating the market forces as background, not as the deciding factor. Here is a calm way through it.

1. Settle the roof question first — age, shape, and shade (see our roof-first guide).

2. Figure your real usage and a sensible system size (see our sizing guide).
3. Get several written quotes on today's prices and compare them on dollars per watt.
4. Run the payback math on the full, current price — no vanished credit, no guessed rate jumps.
5. If the numbers work and your situation fits, proceed; if not, wait until they do.

TIP

This approach quietly sidesteps the whole "will prices rise or fall" worry. You are deciding on real quotes and your real situation today — which is the only information anyone actually has. The future prices nobody can promise simply stop being your problem.

10 What If Prices Do Fall Later?

It is fair to ask: what if I buy now and panel prices drop in a few years? It is possible — technology and manufacturing can bring prices down even as tariffs push the other way. But it helps to keep this worry in proportion rather than letting it freeze you.

- If you waited and prices fell, you would also have gone those years without any bill savings.
- The savings a system makes while you wait can offset a good deal of a later price drop.
- Current tariff pressure leans against big near-term price drops, though nothing is certain.
- A system bought at a fair price today still does its job for 25 years regardless of later prices.

GOOD TO KNOW

Waiting for a possible price drop is a bit like waiting to buy a furnace hoping next year's is cheaper — meanwhile you are paying to stay cold. If today's numbers work for you, a later price change does not undo the value your system delivers in the years between. Decide on today's real numbers.

11 Ignoring the Pressure Either Way

Both a hard-sell "buy now before prices explode" and a vague "just keep waiting" can lead you astray, because both substitute a guess about the future for a clear look at your own situation. The pressure to buy is usually a sales tactic; the urge to wait indefinitely is often just understandable hesitation dressed up as strategy.

The antidote to both is the same: make the decision on facts you can actually check — your roof, your usage, real quotes, honest payback — on your own timeline. A good decision made calmly this year will look fine next year, whichever way prices drift. That steadiness is worth more than trying to outguess the market.

WATCH OUT

If you feel pulled between a salesperson insisting you must buy today and your own instinct to wait and see, that tug-of-war is exactly where I can help. I will look at the real numbers and your situation with you, with no stake in which way you decide.

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12 How a Tariff Reaches Your Quote

A tariff is a tax on imported goods, and much solar equipment is made overseas, so tariffs do push panel prices up. But it is worth seeing how small a slice of your total bill the panels really are before you let tariff headlines drive your decision.

Where your money goes	Roughly how big a slice
Panels (the part tariffs hit most)	Only one portion of the hardware

Other hardware (inverter, racking, wiring)	Another portion of the hardware
Labor, permits, inspection, overhead	A large share of the total

So when a tariff raises panel costs, it nudges your total up — it does not double it. A tariff that lifts panel prices moves the panels, which are only one slice of the whole installed bill. That is the honest scale of the effect.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> This is why 'panel prices are climbing' and 'my solar quote is much higher' are not the same sentence. The hardware you read about in the news is only part of what you are buying.

13 Where Tariffs and Prices Stand in Late 2026

Here is the honest state of play, without pretending anyone can see the future. Tariffs on imported solar equipment have been climbing through 2025 and 2026, and more have been discussed. What no one can tell you is exactly where they land next year.

- Tariffs have generally risen, and further changes are possible — but a future tariff is not a settled fact, no matter how confidently a salesperson states it.
- At the same time, solar technology keeps improving, so waiting can sometimes buy you better equipment for your money.
- The big money-saver that is gone either way is the 30% federal tax credit, which expired at the end of 2025 and is not expected to return.
- Anyone who claims to know precisely what prices will do next year is guessing — treat confident predictions, in both directions, with caution.

WATCH OUT

Beware the salesperson who says 'prices are about to jump, so sign tonight.' Even when prices are generally rising, nobody knows the exact timing — and manufactured urgency is a sales tactic, not a forecast. Always confirm any incentive claim with a tax professional, not the person selling you the system.

14 A 'Wait or Buy' Worked Comparison

The honest answer to 'should I wait?' is 'it depends, and no one can be sure.' But you can lay the trade-offs side by side and decide with clear eyes instead of under pressure. Here is the real shape of the choice.

	Buy now	Wait a year or two
Prices	Lock in today's price; avoid possible tariff-driven rises	Risk higher prices if tariffs climb further
Technology	Today's panels	Possibly better or cheaper panels later
Federal credit	Gone — not available now	Still gone — not expected back
Savings on your bill	Start saving sooner	Keep paying the utility in the meantime
Peace of mind	Done and decided	Keep your options open, keep watching

Notice what is the same in both columns: the 30% federal credit is gone whether you buy now or wait, so it is not a reason to rush. The genuine trade-off is 'start saving now at today's price' versus 'keep your money and hope for better prices or tech later' — a judgment call, not a math certainty.

TIP

One quiet point in favor of acting when you are ready: every year you wait, you keep paying your utility. For some households that ongoing bill outweighs the hope of a slightly cheaper system later. For others it does not. It depends on your own numbers.

15 What You Control, and What You Can't

Market timing is the part you cannot control, so it is a poor thing to anchor a big decision on. The good news is that the things that actually make a solar project succeed or fail are almost all within your control.

You can't control	You can control
Future tariff levels	Getting two or three written quotes
Next year's panel prices	Checking your roof is ready first
What incentives may or may not return	Comparing dollars per watt fairly
Overall market swings	Vetting the installer's license, insurance, and references

Spend your energy on the right-hand column. A well-chosen installer, a sound roof, and a fair price will matter far more to how happy you are in ten years than whether you timed the market perfectly — which, honestly, no one does.

GOOD TO KNOW

This is the same advice sensible people give about most big purchases: you cannot time the market, so focus on buying well. With solar, 'buying well' means a ready roof, a trustworthy installer, and a fair price per watt.

16 A Timing Decision Checklist

If you are stuck on 'now or later,' walk this short list instead of trying to predict prices. It points you toward the answer that fits your own situation, not a guess about the market.

1. Is your roof ready, with twenty-plus years of life left? If not, that decides your timing — sort the roof first, regardless of tariffs.
2. Do you have two or three fair written quotes in hand? If not, you are not ready to decide either way yet.
3. Is a quote's dollars-per-watt in a reasonable range for 2026? A fair price now beats a hoped-for price later.
4. Are you being pressured to 'sign tonight'? If so, that pressure is a reason to slow down, not speed up.
5. Would you rather start saving on your bill now, or keep your money and watch the market a while? Be honest about which you'd actually prefer.
6. If the roof is ready, the quotes are fair, and you are not being rushed — buying when you are ready is a sound choice. If any of those is shaky, waiting costs you little.

> **WATCH OUT**
>
> If the 'wait or buy' question has you going in circles, that is a good moment to call me. I don't sell or install solar, so I have no reason to push you to buy now or to wait — only to help you weigh your own roof, your own quotes, and your own bill with a clear head.

17 When to Call Bill

"Should I wait or buy?" is one of the hardest solar questions precisely because it asks you to weigh an unknowable future. You do not have to carry that alone or trust a salesperson whose livelihood depends on your answer. Bill has no stake in your timing, so he can help you focus on what you can actually control.

- A salesperson is pressuring you to buy now before prices supposedly jump.
- You're tempted to wait indefinitely and aren't sure if that's wise.
- You want help running honest payback math on today's real prices.
- You're unsure whether your roof, finances, and plans point to now or later.
- You want a neutral opinion free of any stake in whether — or when — you buy.

Call Bill at (330) 200-8042. He will help you set aside the market guesswork, look honestly at your roof, your numbers, and your plans, and decide whether now or later is right for you — calmly, and entirely in your interest.

CHEAT SHEET

Everyday Cheat Sheet

Keep this handy. Decide on your roof, usage, and real quotes — not a guess about future prices.

I want to...	Do this...
Understand tariffs	They tax imported panels; higher tariffs nudge installed prices up over time
Know where they stand	As of late 2026, tariffs have been rising and more are expected — direction, not a precise forecast
Weigh buying now	Prices may rise further, and waiting won't recapture the gone tax credit
Weigh waiting	Best reasons are your own: roof not ready, finances not ready, or a likely move
Drop the credit from timing	It's gone for buyers now, with no known return — don't time around it
Decide calmly	Settle roof + sizing, get real quotes, run honest payback — ignore both pressures
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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