

# CALIFORNIA SOLAR CONSUMER PROTECTION GUIDE

PUTTING SOLAR ON YOUR HOME IS AN IMPORTANT FINANCIAL DECISION.  
DON'T SIGN A CONTRACT UNTIL YOU READ THIS DOCUMENT!

In many areas of California, you cannot connect a residential solar system to the electric grid until you read, initial, and sign this document. (*The requirement to sign this document does not apply to solar systems that are part of new home construction or multi-family buildings, and it does not apply to solar thermal systems.*)

**TAKE YOUR TIME.**



**WATCH OUT FOR FALSE CLAIMS!**



**MAKE SURE THE SOLAR PROVIDER HAS A VALID CONTRACTOR LICENSE.**



Customer Initial Here \_\_\_\_\_ (1/4)

# MAKE SURE TO READ AT LEAST THE NEXT 3 PAGES

If you are considering signing a contract for a residential solar system.

Most solar providers are honest and fair. However, there are still some false claims you need to watch out for. Do not do business with a salesperson that makes one of these false claims.



## False claims to watch out for

**FALSE**

You can get free solar energy at no cost to you.

**FALSE**

You will never pay an electricity bill ever again after a solar system is installed.

**FALSE**

Time is running out and you must quickly sign an electronic tablet to get solar.



## The Truth

**Solar energy is rarely free. An honest company will be upfront about all the costs you will pay over time.**

- After going solar, you will typically pay a small electricity bill every month, depending on the utility billing rate. See page 16 for an example.

**TRUE**

**TRUE**

**After going solar, you will typically pay a small electricity bill every month depending on the utility billing rate. See page 16 for details.**

- Customers who take out a solar loan or sign a lease will also receive a monthly bill from a loan company or solar provider.
- If you use PACE (Property Assessed Clean Energy) financing, you will also make a payment once or twice a year with your property taxes or monthly with your mortgage payment.

**TRUE**

**An honest salesperson would never rush you to sign anything without giving you time to review what you are signing.**

- California law requires that a salesperson show you the contract terms before you sign.

\*If you think you have been a victim of solar fraud, report the incident to the Contractors State License Board (CSLB) at 800-321-CSLB (2752) or [www.cslb.ca.gov/consumers](http://www.cslb.ca.gov/consumers)



# Know Your Rights

## **YOU HAVE THE RIGHT...**

to a copy of a solar contract and financing agreement in the language in which the salesperson spoke to you.

If a solar provider comes to your home to sell you solar panels and speaks to you in a language other than English (such as Spanish), you have the right to a copy of the contract in that language.

## **YOU HAVE THE RIGHT...**

to read this entire 22-page guide before signing a contract.

**Do not feel pressured to read this guide while the salesperson waits. Ask them to come back at a later date to allow you time to read it.**

If you are a public utility customer, a solar provider must give you the time to read and sign this guide before you sign a contract for solar. If they do not allow you to read this document, they should not be allowed to interconnect your solar system to the electric grid.

## **YOU HAVE THE RIGHT...**

to a Solar Disclosure Document from your solar provider.

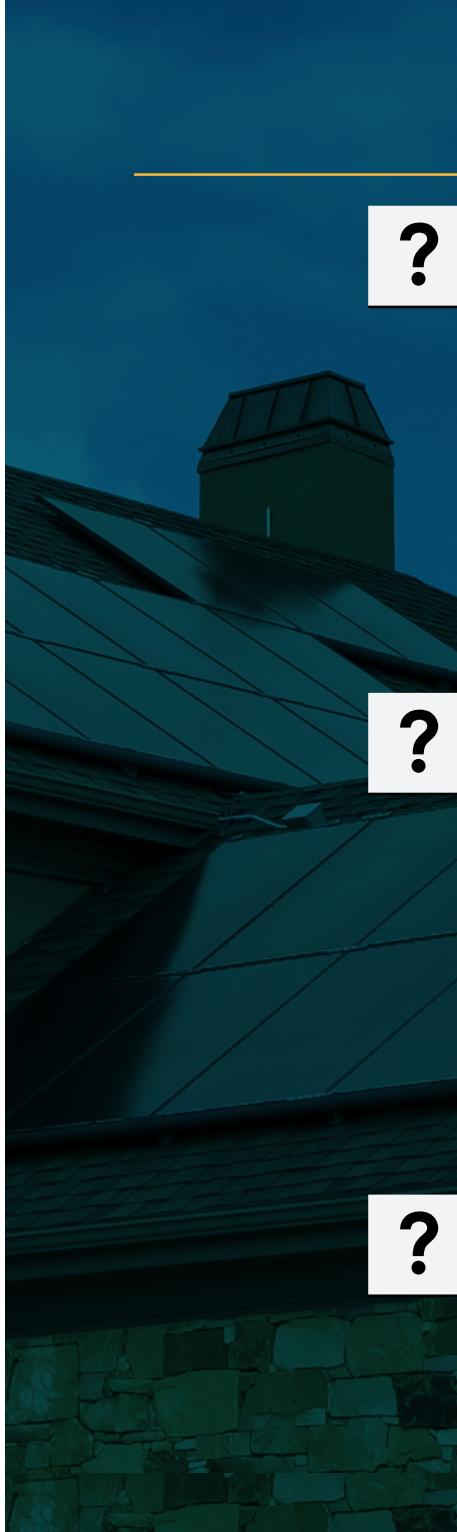
By law, a solar provider must provide you with a completed Solar Energy System Disclosure Document created by the Contractors State License Board (CSLB). This one page document shows you the total costs for the solar energy system. A blank version of this document is available at [www.cslb.ca.gov/contractors/SolarSheet.aspx](http://www.cslb.ca.gov/contractors/SolarSheet.aspx).

## **YOU HAVE THE RIGHT...**

to a 3-day cancellation period after signing a contract.

You have at least three business days to cancel your contract for any reason. You may cancel the contract by emailing, mailing, faxing, or delivering a notice to your solar provider by midnight of the third business day after you received a signed, dated copy of the contract. Note that different rules may apply for contracts negotiated by a company's place of business.

**If your solar provider refuses to cancel the contract, report them to the Contractors State License Board at 800-321-CSLB(2751) or [www.cslb.ca.gov/consumers](http://www.cslb.ca.gov/consumers).**



# Ask a Solar Provider These Initial Questions Before You Sign a Contract



## What is your Contractors State License Board (CSLB) license number?

Ask for a proof of the license. Then check the license to make sure it is valid by going to [www.cslb.ca.gov/consumers](http://www.cslb.ca.gov/consumers) or calling 800-321-CSLB (2752).

- The license must be active and in classification A (General Engineering Contractor), c-46 (Solar Contractor), C-10 (Electrical Contractor), or B (General Building Contractor) in order to be valid.
- CSLB License Number is: \_\_\_\_\_

If your solar provider does not have a valid contractor license, do not sign a contract with them and report them to the CSLB.



## What is the total cost of the solar energy system?

If you are considering a solar loan, lease, or power purchase agreement, also ask:

- Is there a down payment?
- How much will I pay per month? When will these payments increase and by how much?

If you are considering PACE financing, also ask:

- How much will I pay once or twice a year with my property taxes or monthly with my mortgage?



## If I sell my home, what are my options and what do I need to do?

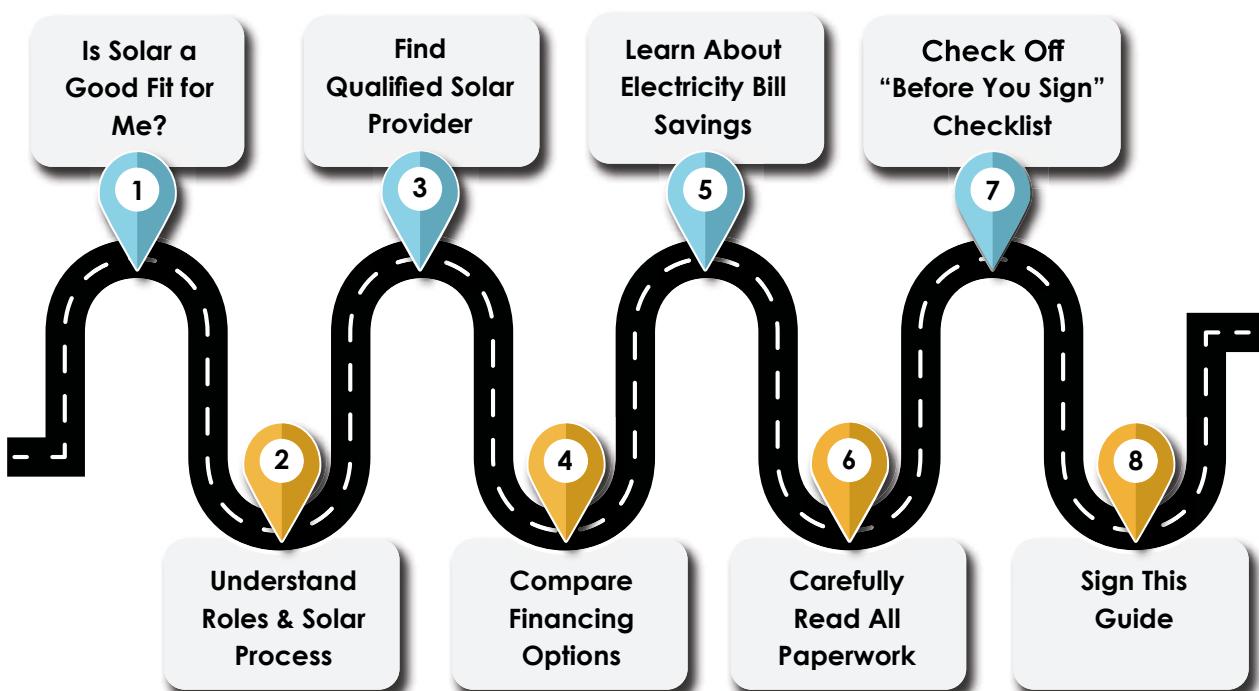
Ask your solar provider, lender, or PACE administrator to show you where in the contract it describes what happens when you sell your home.

**For other important questions to ask a solar provider before you sign a contract, go to page 10 of this guide.**

## Ok, I read these 3 pages. Now What?

- For a step-by-step guide for how to go solar, proceed to the next page. This is recommended, even if you've already started the solar process!
- If you are getting ready to sign a contract, skip to the "Before You Sign" checklist, on page 22 of this guide.

Make sure to get **3 bids** from different solar providers before you sign a contract. See page 9 of this guide for more details.



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## STEP 1: Is Solar a Good Fit for Me?

Solar photo-voltaic panels can capture sunlight on your roof or property and convert it into electricity. This electricity powers the needs of your home, such as lights, electric vehicles, and appliances.

**Before you consider getting solar at your home, ask yourself:**



Am I a good candidate for rooftop solar?

- Does my roof receive a good amount of sunlight or is it mostly shaded? What direction does the roof face? Roofs that are mostly shaded or face due north are not good candidates for solar. If you plan to replace your roof soon, you should replace it before installing a rooftop solar system.
- If your roof is heavily shaded or isn't in great condition, or if you are a renter, community solar programs could be a good fit for you. With community solar, you receive 50-100 percent of your electricity from solar projects located across California. Community solar programs vary and may increase your electricity bill or provide an electricity bill savings. Contact your electricity provider for more information.



Have I made my home energy efficient first?

Making your home energy efficient before going solar can decrease your overall energy use and reduce the size of the solar system you need, potentially saving you thousands of dollars. Call your electricity provider or check their website for energy efficiency tips and advice on how to get an in-person home energy assessment.

**Solar Providers**

Solar providers are the companies that sell you solar and send installers to your home. Sometimes they provide financing. They must be licensed. See page 4.

**Installers**

Installers are sent by Solar Providers to your home to check roof, ground and electric conditions and to install the solar system. They must be licensed like a Solar Provider. See page 4.

**Salespeople**

Salespeople work for Solar Providers and may call you or knock on your door. They must be registered, with some limited exceptions. Ask for their “Home Improvement Salesperson (HIS) registration” and check it at 800-321-CSLB (2752) or [www.cslb.ca.gov](http://www.cslb.ca.gov).

**Lenders**

Lenders provide you with financing if you have a solar loan or PACE financing.

**PACE Administrators**

PACE administrators manage PACE financing programs. They must be licensed. Check their license at <https://docqnet dbo.ca.gov/licensesearch>.

**Electricity Providers**

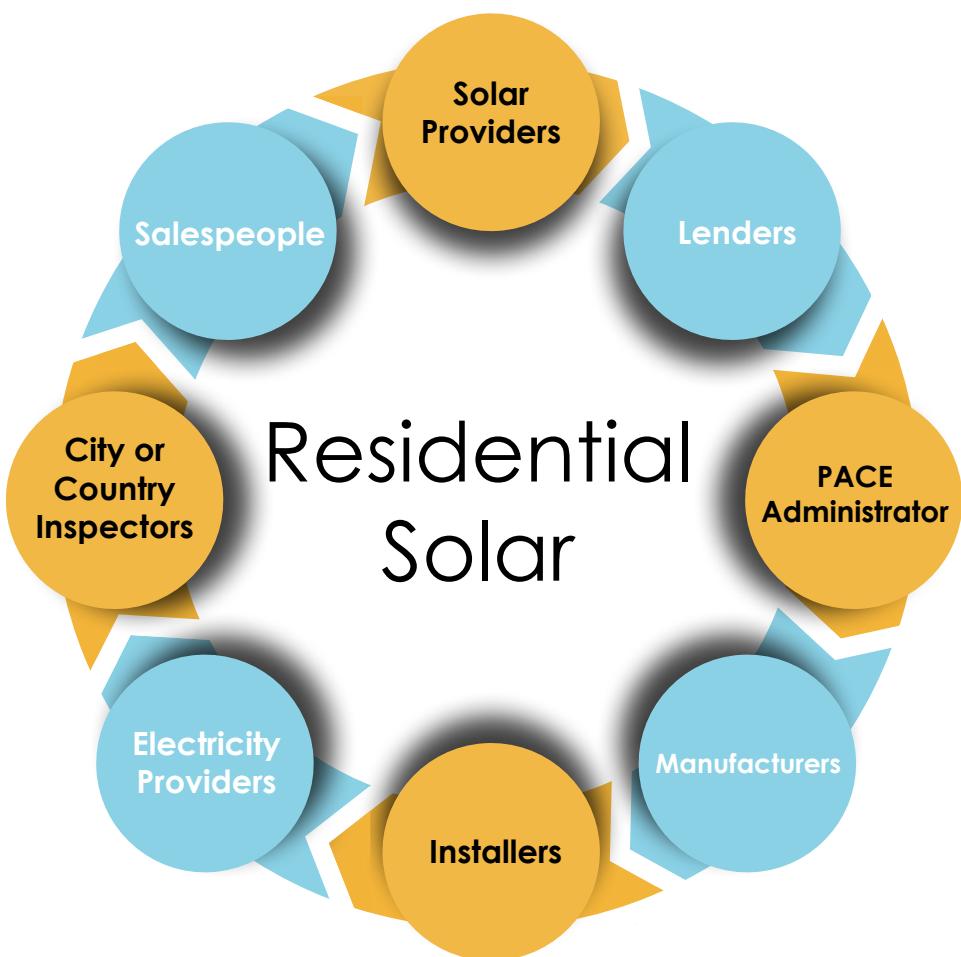
Electricity providers interconnect your solar system to the electric grid and send you electricity bills that may include solar bill credits.

**Manufacturers**

Manufacturers are the companies who make solar equipment. They provide most solar warranties for purchased systems.

**City/Utility Inspectors**

City/utility inspectors come to your home to make sure the system is up to code to ensure your health and safety.





## Overview of a Typical Rooftop Solar Process

### BEFORE YOU SIGN A CONTRACT

- You .....** decide if rooftop solar is a good fit for you (see page 5)
- You .....** get a home energy assessment to make your home more energy efficient (see page 5)
- You .....** research Solar Providers and compare at least 3 bids (see page 8)
- Solar Provider...** provides you with solar contract, Solar Disclosure Document, and this Solar Consumer Guide
- You .....** qualify for financing (if needed)
- Lender.....** writes up financing agreement (if needed)
- You .....** review solar contract, Solar Disclosure Document, and any financing agreement (see page 18)
- You .....** go through checklist on page 21 of this Solar Consumer Guide
- You .....** sign this Solar Consumer Guide, solar contract, and financing agreement

### AFTER YOU SIGN A CONTRACT

- Installer .....** performs a home site visit to confirm assumptions and check roof, ground, and electric conditions
- Solar Provider .....** finalizes system design and applies for building permit with city or country agency
- Installer .....** installs the solar system (only after receiving city/county permit)
- City/Utility Inspector ....** inspects system for building permit compliance
- Solar Provider .....** submits city/county inspection approval to electricity provider
- You .....** turn on system *after* receiving written approval from electricity provider
- Electricity Provider .....** sends you your new self-generation/net-billing electricity bill (see page 16)
- Lender/Solar Provider ...** sends you first bill for solar system or solar energy\*

#### \*IF YOU USE PACE FINANCING,

you will not receive a bill from a Lender or Solar Provider (the last step above). Instead your payments will be due once or twice a year with your property taxes or monthly with your mortgage payment.



It typically takes 1 to 3 months after you sign a contract for the solar system to be installed at your home.



After the solar system is installed, it typically takes 2-3 weeks to receive approval from your electricity provider to turn your system on. It could take longer depending on your circumstances.

## Find Solar Providers that Serve Your Neighborhood

Go to [www.cslb.ca.gov](http://www.cslb.ca.gov), a government website, and click on the “Find My Licensed Contractor” search on the right-hand side of the page. Enter your city and one of the following license classifications: C-46 (Solar Contractor), C-10 (Electrical Contractor), or B (General Building Contractor).

Go to [www.CaliforniaDGStats.ca.gov](http://www.CaliforniaDGStats.ca.gov), a government-funded website, to enter your zip code and see a list of Solar Providers and recent installation costs. Note that these costs are not verified by the government.

Go to [www.energysage.com](http://www.energysage.com) to research and shop for solar, financing, and energy efficiency options.

Ask friends and neighbors who had solar installed at least a year ago if they recommended a Solar Provider and why.

## Narrow Down the List to Qualified Solar Providers

First, make sure Solar Providers you consider have a valid license from the CSLB. It is illegal for Solar Providers and their Installers to conduct business without a license.

- Go to the Contractors State License Board (CSLB) website at [www.cslb.ca.gov/consumers](http://www.cslb.ca.gov/consumers) or call 800-321-CLSB (2752) to see if the Solar Provider and Installer licenses are active and valid. The licenses must be in the classifications: C-46 (Solar Contractor), C-10 (Electrical Contractor), B (General Building Contractor), or A (General Engineering Contractor).

Find out how long the company has been in business and how many installations they have done.

Check out trusted customer review websites online. Since some websites may not be neutral, check a few different websites to make sure reviews are consistent.

It's a good sign if companies employ installers certified by the North American Board of Certified Energy Practitioners (NABCEP), a high standard in the industry.

## Get Bids From At Least 3 Qualified Solar Providers and Ask Questions

After you narrow down the list of Solar Providers, separately ask each of them for a bid or price quote.

- Note that the best option for you is not necessarily the cheapest bid. A very low bid may indicate that a Solar Provider is trying to cut corners.

Don't hesitate to ask Solar Providers a lot of questions up front. A qualified company will be happy to answer all of them. A sample list of questions is on the next page.



# Questions to Ask a Solar Provider Before You Sign a Contract

## COMPANY BACKGROUND



What is your company's contractor license number from the Contractors State License Board (CSLB)? What is your Installer's contractor license number?

Will you subcontract with another company to install the solar system? If so, what is their CSLB contractor license number?

How long have you been in business and how many systems have you installed?

Can you provide me with three customer references to call or visit? These customers should have solar installed for at least a year.

## DESIGN & ROOF



Is my roof a good candidate for solar? Why?

Does my roof need to be replaced before installing solar panels?

- If yes, how much will that cost, who will do it, what is their license number, and is there a roof warranty?

Why did you choose this specific design and size for the solar system you are recommending to me?

- Note that a system sized to cover all of your electricity needs isn't necessarily the best investment. Typically, a system is sized to around 80-85 percent of your electricity use from the previous year.

What steps will you take to ensure my roof won't leak?

Roughly how much will it cost to remove and re-install the panels if I need to replace my roof in the future, including inspection fees?

## WARRANTIES & PERFORMANCE OF SOLAR SYSTEM



Are there warranties for the panels and inverters?

- If yes, how long do they last and who do I contact to replace these components?
- If equipment such as the inverter fails after the warranty period, how much will it cost to replace?

Are there warranties for labor/construction?

Are repairs and maintenance included in the contract? If yes, who should I contact for repairs?

Will I be able to monitor the performance of the system once it's installed? If so, how?

Does the solar provider offer a minimum energy guarantee (common with leases and power purchase agreements)?

- If yes, how will I be paid if the system does not produce as much energy as promised in the contract?

Is there an insurance policy that comes with the solar system, or do I need to take out additional homeowner's insurance? Note that this is especially important if you live in fire-prone areas.

What are my obligations in the contract if my solar system stops working due to a disaster like an earthquake or a fire?

Who has the right to claim the environmental benefits of the power generated by my system? (See "Getting Environmental Credit for Going Green" on page 17).

## ELECTRICITY BILL SAVINGS ESTIMATE (see page 16)



*Please beware of a solar provider who tells you solar is free - it is not. See page 2 for more information on false claims.*

Explain to me why an electricity bill savings estimate is not a guarantee.

Even though I will continue to pay electricity bills after going solar, I can receive solar bill credits on my electricity bill. How does that work?

Does my electricity provider offer special rates for solar customers?

What electricity rate do you recommend I switch to for solar, and why?

How long will I be on that rate, and how can I compare rates on my electricity provider's website?

## IMPACTS ON FUTURE SALE OF YOUR HOME



Will a solar system make it more difficult for me to sell my home or refinance?

For leases and PACE financed systems:

- What happens if the home buyer doesn't want the solar system or doesn't qualify to take on my lease or PACE financed system?
- Are there fees if I need to terminate the contract early to sell my house?
- Are there fees for transferring the lease or PACE financing to a new homeowner?

## TIMELINE (see page 7)

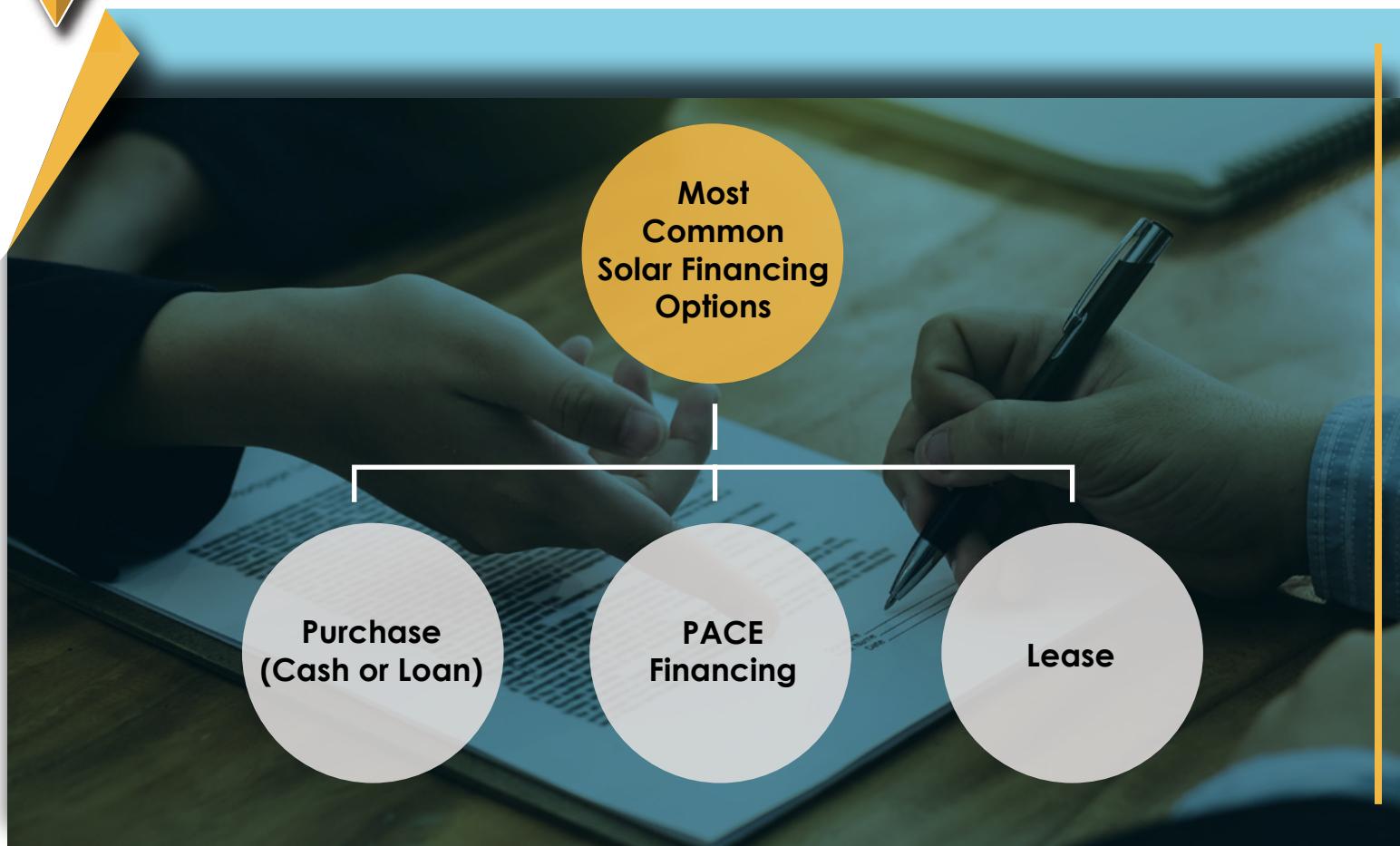


When do you propose to start and finish installing solar on my roof?

After installation is complete, will I receive written confirmation of permission to operate?

What situations would allow me to be released from a contract?

Do you want to know questions to ask about loans or financing?  
Keep reading because those are in the next sections!



## Side-By-Side Quick Financial Comparison

### Purchase with Cash or Loan

#### PROS

- Typically greater return on investment.
- If you use a loan, little or no upfront costs.
- May increase value of home.
- You can directly receive tax credits and deductions. Consult tax professional to see if you qualify.

#### CONS

- You are typically responsible for repairs and maintenance. This may involve contacting different manufacturers, who could go out of business during the 10-20 year component life cycles.
- Some solar loans place a lien on your property. In those cases, if you do not make your payments, this could result in foreclosure or make it more difficult to sell your home or refinance your mortgage.



## PROS



## CONS

### PACE Financing

- Little or no upfront costs.
- May have a longer repayment period than typical home improvement loan, which may be preferable.
- You may be able to receive tax credits and deductions. Consult tax professional to see if you qualify.

- PACE financing results in first-priority lien on your property. Your bank may require you to pay off the PACE assessment prior to refinancing.
- If you do not make your PACE payments, this could result in foreclosure or make it more difficult to sell your home or refinance your mortgage.
- You are typically responsible for repairs and maintenance. This may involve contacting different manufacturers, who could go out of business during the 10-20 year component life cycles.

### Lease

- Little or no upfront costs.
- Solar Provider is responsible for all monitoring, maintenance, and repairs.
- Minimum energy production often guaranteed.

- Selling home may be more complicated than with a purchase system. Options typically are: the new owner must agree to take on the lease/agreement, you continue making payments, or you buy out the lease/agreement, which could be thousands of dollars.
- Solar Provider could go out of business during the contract period.



## A Closer Look at Purchase (with cash or loan)

### PURCHASE

You can purchase a solar system from a Solar Provider or Manufacturer with a solar loan or cash. In this approach, you own the installed system. Types of loans include:

- **Secured loans:** these require an asset that will serve as collateral for the loan - often that asset is your solar system.
- **Unsecured loans:** these do not require any collateral, similar to a credit card.

A secured loan is often preferred because it typically has lower interest rates.

Many Solar Providers work with lenders that offer solar loans, but you should check with banks and credit unions as well. Compare offers to make sure you are being offered a reasonable interest rate.

If you install and own a solar system by the end of 2020, there is supposed to be a 26 percent federal tax credit available (also referred to as the “ITC”). The federal tax credit is expected to drop to 22 percent for systems installed in 2021, and then drop to 0 percent for systems installed after 2021. If you have questions about the ITC please contact the Internal Revenue Service at <https://www.irs.gov/> or any other questions, including whether a loan is tax deductible, please speak to a Certified Public Accountant (CPA) for personal tax advice.

Unless you purchase a maintenance plan or your system comes with one, you will be responsible for any maintenance and repairs. Make sure you save the equipment warranties, particularly for the inverter, which may need to be replaced sooner than other equipment. If you sell your home, look for real estate agents and appraisers with experience selling homes with solar. You may include the system in the house sale just like any other major home component.



### Questions to Ask a Lender About the Purchase of a Solar System with a Loan:

- ? What is the total cost of the loan over the entire course of the contract?
- ? How much will I pay up front, how much over time, and for how long?
- ? What is my interest rate? What is my annual percentage rate (“APR”)?
- ? Who do I contact if I have questions about my loan payments?
- ? Will a solar loan make it more difficult for me to sell or refinance my home? Will I need to buyout my loan? Who do I contact?



## A Closer Look at PACE (Property Assessed Clean Energy)

PACE is a financing option that is available in some areas of California. In a PACE financing arrangement, a PACE Program Administrator finances the upfront costs of a solar system, which you then pay through an assessment on your property tax bill. With PACE financing, you own the solar system.

PACE financing lasts for a fixed term, typically around 10-30 years, and it is attached to your house. If you sell your house before you have fully paid the PACE assessment, a buyer may require you to pay off the assessment, which will be what is remaining in the balance, which could be thousands of dollars. Some mortgage lenders will not loan money to buyers to purchase properties with PACE liens unless the full assessment is paid.

Unlike Leases and Power Purchase Agreements that require monthly payments, PACE assessments are typically due once or twice a year, in larger lump sums, with your property taxes. Given this unique arrangement, it's important to understand how much you will owe and when, so that you can set aside enough money throughout the year to cover the amount.

If your house is mortgaged and you typically pay your taxes with an escrow or impound account, your mortgage company may increase the amount you pay monthly to *(continued on next page)*

cover the anticipated increase to your property tax bill. Discuss how PACE will affect your monthly mortgage payment before you sign an agreement.

**Be aware that if you fail to make your PACE payments included with your property taxes or mortgage, your home could be put in foreclosure.**



### Questions to Ask a PACE Program Administrator About a PACE Financed System:

- ? What is the total cost of the financing over the entire course of the contract?
- ? Are lending rates competitive?
- ? How much will I owe for PACE financing when I pay my mortgage or property taxes?
- ? How many times a year will I owe this PACE payment?
- ? What happens if I want to sell or refinance my home? Will selling or refinancing be more difficult with PACE? Is there anything I have to do with the mortgage company?
- ? What are the penalties for failing to pay the assessment on time?
- ? Who do I contact if I have problems making my PACE payments?
- ? Is there a penalty for early payoff?



## A Closer Look at a Lease

With a **Lease**, the Solar Provider owns the system on your property and “rents” it to you for a set period of time. A Solar Provider will install the solar system on your home, and you will make scheduled monthly payments in exchange for all the electricity the system produces. A typical Lease contract period is 20-25 years.

- If you sell your house before the Lease is over, you will have to pay the Solar Provider the remainder of the value of the Lease or transfer the contract to the new property owner. Make sure you understand the specific contract terms, since buying out a Lease can cost thousands of dollars.
- Payments for Leases will typically increase by a specified amount every year based on an “escalation clause” or “escalator.” Escalators are typically in the range of a 1 percent to 3 percent increase above the rate you paid in the previous year. Be cautious of entering into a contract with an escalator higher than that.
- There may be different ways to arrange Leases, such as paying more up front to reduce your monthly payments.



## Questions to Ask a Lender or Solar Provider About a Lease

- ? What is the total cost of the solar system or solar energy over the entire course of the contract?
- ? How much will I pay up front, how much over time, and for how long?
- ? Will my payments increase over time? How much will they increase, and how frequently?
- ? Is there an option to make a down payment to reduce my monthly payments for a lease?
- ? What happens if I wish to end the Lease early?
- ? If I end my agreement early, will I owe a balloon payment and/or an early termination fee? If so, how much will I owe?
- ? Will a Lease make it more difficult for me to sell or refinance my home?

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## STEP 5: Learn About Electricity Bill Savings



### Electricity Bill Savings Estimates Do Not Guarantee Savings

An electricity bill savings estimate is an educated guess about how much you could save with rooftop solar. Here are some reasons why it's possible that your savings could be lower than the estimate:

Electricity bill savings estimates are based on several uncertain factors, such as your future energy use. For example, if your family grows, you buy an electric vehicle, or you decide to turn up your air conditioning in the summer, your energy use will go up along with your electricity bill. This is what is known as "usage creep".

Electricity prices and rates can change over time. Your electricity provider may require you to switch to a different rate in the future (such as Time Of Use or TOU), which could change how much you save.

If you sell your home, you could incur additional costs. For example, if a buyer doesn't want to take on a Lease, you might have to buy out the contract, which could be thousands of dollars.

**Before you sign a contract, ask yourself:** if the savings end up being lower than the estimated monthly or yearly savings, does getting rooftop solar still make sense to me?

## HOW ELECTRICITY BILL SAVINGS WORK

There is a special arrangement with your electricity provider that is called Net Billing. Net Billing allows you to get a financial credit on your monthly electricity bill when your solar system sends electricity back to the grid after first powering the electricity needs at your home. This credit is typically equal to the current market wholesale rate, depending on the utility.

### Distributed Self-Generation

The City of Banning will utilize a bi-directional meter to measure the excess kWh generated by the customer's distributed energy resource and returned to the utility's distribution system each billing cycle. The City shall credit the customer's account for 100% of their excess kWh returned to the Banning Electric Utility at the Distributed Self-Generation Rate.

The Distributed Self-Generation Rate will be set at the average wholesale energy price during the hours when solar is producing. The rate is subject to administrative change if there are changes to the average energy prices.

### Your Electricity Bill

Since the sun isn't always shining, solar customers also rely on electricity from their electricity provider. After your solar system is interconnected to the grid, your monthly electricity bill will summarize how much electricity you took in or "consumed" from your electricity provider, and how much electricity your solar system sent to the grid or "exported."

If you took in more than you sent out to the grid in any given month, you will see an overall charge on your bill. If you sent out more than you took in, you will see a credit. This credit is based on an average wholesale energy price. This is called a monthly net billing and credits cannot be carried over to the next month. There will always be a monthly minimum bill each month just like other customers.

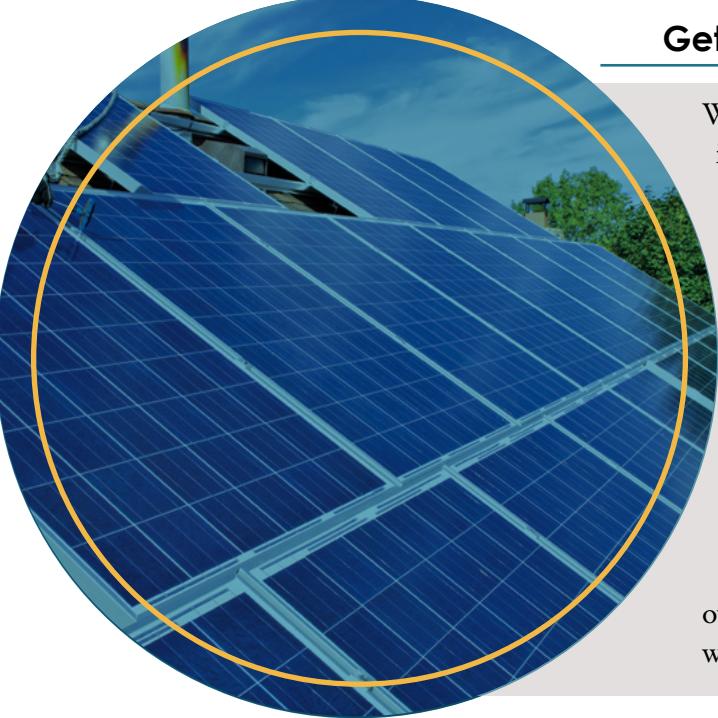
## YOU WILL CONTINUE TO HAVE A BILL

(Comparison of a 1000 kWh monthly bill for standard and net billing)

STANDARD BILL for 1000 kWh (NO SOLAR)	
• Electric Monthly Charge	18.00
• Baseline Service 1000 kWh	152.32
• Public Benefit Program	4.85
• Water Customer Charge	22.22
• Water up to 12 CCF	9.00
• Sewer	21.73
• Trash	22.38
<b>TOTAL \$250.50</b>	

NET BILLING for total of 1000 kWh (700 Solar, 300 from grid, 50 sold back to BEU)	
• Electric Monthly Charge	18.00
• Delivered Charge 300 kWh	45.70
• Returned Credit (50 kWh)	-1.40
• Public Benefit Program	1.82
• Water Customer Charge	22.00
• Water up to 12 CCF	9.00
• Sewer	21.73
• Trash	22.38
<b>TOTAL \$139.23</b>	

## Getting Environmental Credit for Going Green



When a residential solar system produces electricity, the system is eligible to receive Renewable Energy Certificates, or “RECs,” which are certificates that represent the renewable energy that is generated. If you purchase a solar system, you own the rights to these RECs and can make the claim that you’re producing clean energy and avoiding emissions of greenhouse gases by going solar. However, if you enter a Lease or PPA, the contract may state that the Solar Provider or someone else owns the RECs. If you do not own the RECs, they can be sold without your knowledge to other customers who use them to make environmental claims or comply with clean energy requirements. And with PACE financing, a local jurisdiction may own the RECs. If owning the RECs is important to you, ask your solar provider who will own the RECs, and check the contract fine print.

## Combining Solar with Storage

When you install battery storage with your solar system, you can store unused solar electricity produced by your panels for use in the evening when the sun goes down. The software that comes with battery storage automatically determines whether to store the extra energy or export it to the grid to maximize cost savings. Battery storage can also provide limited back-up power.



## STEP6: Carefully Read All Paperwork

### THE SOLAR ENERGY SYSTEM DISCLOSURE DOCUMENT

This one-page document from the Contractors State License Board shows you the total costs for the proposed solar energy system. It also has information about your three-day right to cancel a contract. A Solar Provider is required to fill out this document. It may be placed as the cover page to the contract. See a blank version at [www.csrb.ca.gov/contractors/SolarSheet.aspx](http://www.csrb.ca.gov/contractors/SolarSheet.aspx).

### CONTRACT

- The solar contract is the legally binding document between you and the Solar Provider. Make sure to read it carefully.
- Make sure everything you were promised is written in the contract. For example, many answers to the questions on pages 10 and 11 of this guide should be referenced in the contract.
- By law any contract for solar installation must include:
  - Contractor information, including business address and license numbers
  - Description of the project, including equipment installed and materials used
  - Contract price, plus finance charge and/or down payment if applicable
  - Approximate start and end date of the contract term
  - Notice of a 3-day right to cancel the contract (with limited exceptions)
- Ask the Solar Provider what situations would allow you to be released from the contract. For example, if your Solar Provider discovers a site visit that your roof is shaded in a way that wasn't expected, that could cancel the contract.

### FINANCIAL PAPERWORK

- If you are purchasing a system with a solar loan, you will be asked to sign a separate financing agreement. The Lender will provide you with this separate agreement.
- If you are purchasing a system with PACE financing, you must sign: (1) a Financing Application and, (2) a Financing Agreement.
  - Before you sign the Financing Application, read it carefully to make sure all the information is correct, including your contact information, your income, and the cost of the solar energy system.
  - The separate Financing Agreement may be provided by the Solar Provider, the PACE administrator, or a financing institution.
- Make sure everything you were promised is written into any financial agreements. For example, many answers to the questions on pages 14-16 of this guide should be referenced in the contract.



## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

### Low-Income Solar Programs

- **Grid Alternatives and DAC Program:**  
866-921-4696 and [www.gridalternatives.org/qualify](http://www.gridalternatives.org/qualify)

### Contractors State License Board (CSLB)

- **CSLB 24-Hour Licensing and Consumer Information:**  
800-321-CSLB (2752)
- **Check a Contractor License or Home Improvement Salesperson Registration:**  
<http://www.cslb.ca.gov/OnlineServices/CheckLicenseII/CheckLicense.aspx>
- **CSLB Solar Smart:**  
[www.cslb.ca.gov/Consumers/Solar\\_Smart](http://www.cslb.ca.gov/Consumers/Solar_Smart)
- **CSLB Solar Energy System Disclosure Document:**  
[www.cslb.ca.gov/contractors/SolarSheet.aspx](http://www.cslb.ca.gov/contractors/SolarSheet.aspx)

### Department of Business of Oversight (DBO)

- **PACE Administrator License Check:**  
<https://docqnet dbo.ca.gov/>
- **Filing a Complaint against PACE provider:**  
[www dbo.ca.gov](http://www dbo.ca.gov)

### Solar Financing Guides

- **CESA Homeowner's Guide to Solar Financing:** search here:  
<http://cesa.org/resource-library>
- **CESA/George Washington University Rooftop Solar Financing 101:**  
<http://cesa.org/projects/sustainable-solar/videos>



## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES (cont.)

### Other Solar Guides

- **Solar Energy Industries Association (SEIA) Residential Consumer Guide to Solar Power:**  
<http://www.seia.org/research-resources/residential-consumer-guide-solar-power>
- **Interstate Renewable Energy Council (IREC) Be Solar Smart Consumer Checklist:**  
<https://irecusa.org/consumer-protection/consumer-checklist/>
- **CESA/George Washington University Choosing a Solar Installer:**  
<http://cesa.org/projects/sustainable-solar/videos>
- **EnergySage Solar 101:**  
<http://www.energysage.com/solar/101>
- **Go Solar California:**  
<https://gosolarcalifornia.ca.gov/>



- **City of Banning Electric Utility:**  
<http://banning.ca.us/57/Banning-Electric-Utility>

## STEP 7: “Before You Sign” Checklist



**Before you sign any documents, make sure you have completed these items!**

Remember, take your time and don't feel pressured to sign a contract. If you feel you need more time to think about your decision or to do more research, do not sign anything until you do.

Consider making your home more energy efficient before getting solar. This could save you money. **See page 5.**

Get at least 3 bids for solar at your home. **See page 8.**

Check to make sure the Solar Provider's license is current and valid with the Contractors State License Board. **See page 4.**

Ask the Solar Provider for 3 customer references and call or visit them.

Ask the Solar Provider the contract questions on **page 4, 9, and 10** so you understand the terms of the solar contract.

If you are financing your system, ask the lender, Solar Provider, or PACE Program Administrator the finance questions on **page 13, 14, and 15**, so you understand the terms of your financing arrangement.

Read the critical information about electricity bill savings estimate on **page 16.**

Carefully read all the documents that the Solar Provider is asking you to sign. These usually include: 1) Solar Energy System Disclosure Document, 2) Contract, and 3) Financial Paperwork. It is important to also read the Utility application and tariff.

Understand what happens after you sign a contract for solar. **See page 8.**

Save copies of all the documents you sign. The information will be useful if you sell your home, need to replace your roof, or have any repair or maintenance issues.

## STEP 8: Sign This Guide

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### Have you read at least the first 4 pages of this guide?

The first 4 pages of the California Solar Consumer Protection Program contain important information on false claims to watch out for and your rights.

It recommends that you take 48 hours to read and understand this entire guide before you sign.

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**\*\*Do not feel pressured to read the complete document while the salesperson waits.  
Ask them to come back at a later date to allow you time to read it.\*\***

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#### CUSTOMER

- I read and initialed the first 4 pages of California's Solar Consumer Protection Guide. The Solar Provider gave me the time to read the entire 22-page guide.
- I have not yet entered into a contract for solar with the Solar Provider signing below.

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Customer Printed Name

Customer Signature

Date

#### SOLAR PROVIDER\*

- The customer initialed the first 4 pages of the guide.
- The customer signed above before entering into a contract for the purchase, lease, power purchase agreement, or PACE financing of a solar system or solar energy with the company named below.

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Company Representative Name/Title

Company Representative Signature

Date

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Company Name

Company Email

Company Phone