

# 10 questions that every consumer should ask before going solar



## 1. SHOULD YOU OWN OR LEASE?

If you can't purchase a system outright, consider financing. Mortgage loans and home equity loans offer several advantages: longer terms, lower interest rates than conventional bank loans, and tax-deductible interest. Leasing allows you to "rent" the solar electric system for a set period of time. Generally, you pay a fixed monthly rate with little or no upfront financial investment. However, the monthly amount of your lease may accelerate over time. In general, you will have lower upfront costs with a lease, but buying/financing will yield a greater return on investment. **Read lease proposal and contract before signing. Do your homework!**

## 2. WHAT IS THE COST?

Residential electric solar systems cost on average \$3 to \$5 per watt installed, but new technologies are bringing the costs down every year. The cost per watt usually goes down as the system size increases. Make sure you get a quote in kWdc so you can compare against other installers or compare the cost of a lease vs. ownership. Costs will vary by installer and are subject to change at any time.

## 3. CAN YOU TAKE ADVANTAGE OF FEDERAL AND STATE TAX CREDITS?

South Carolinians with sufficient tax liability can take advantage of federal and state tax credits for the purchase and installation of a solar electric system. If the solar company proposes a lease, ask them to confirm who gets the benefit of the tax credits. See your tax advisor.

## 4. WHEN WILL YOUR INVESTMENT PAY BACK?

Most solar electric systems last 25 to 30 years and pay for themselves in 9 to 10 years after state and federal tax credits are applied for eligible customers. An important factor in payback is the future utility rate. If the solar company proposes a lease, ask them to compare that to system ownership. Ask for a clear understanding of the assumptions that the installer is using to make any representations.

## 5. DOES YOUR HOMEOWNERS' ASSOCIATION ALLOW RESIDENTS TO HAVE ROOFTOP SOLAR?

In South Carolina, homeowners' associations are allowed to restrict the placement of solar panels. Check before signing a contract.

## 6. WHAT IS THE AGE AND CONDITION OF YOUR ROOF? DOES YOUR ROOF GET AN ADEQUATE AMOUNT OF SUNLIGHT?

If your roof materials are more than 15 years old, you may want to consider replacing it when you purchase your solar electric system; otherwise, you will need to remove your solar panels when you replace your roof. Ask your solar installer about the structural integrity of your roof and its ability to safely support panels. Get a clear understanding of the responsibilities for the panels and who does what if the roof needs repair or replacement. Is your home located on a sunny lot or a shady lot? Depending on the type of solar panel used, the amount of sunlight can impact performance.

## 7. DOES THE INSTALLER OR LEASING COMPANY PROVIDE A PERFORMANCE GUARANTEE AND MAINTENANCE AGREEMENT FOR THE LIFE OF THE PANELS?

Most solar installers and leasing companies will offer both performance guarantees and maintenance agreements. Are these part of the contract or are they extra? Be sure to understand what you are paying for.

## 8. DO YOU HAVE AT LEAST THREE ESTIMATES FROM QUALIFIED INSTALLERS?

It's always worth the effort to get multiple bids and compare. Investing in a solar electric system is a long-term proposition.

## 9. DO YOU RENT OR OWN YOUR HOME?

If you rent or your roof is not well-suited for solar panels, you might consider investing in our Community Solar Program (available to homeowners and renters) where you can (1) purchase your panels upfront or (2) subscribe with no upfront costs and a low monthly fee. Learn more at [DominionEnergySC.com/CommunitySolar](https://www.dominionenergy.com/CommunitySolar).

NOTE: Our Community Solar Program is fully subscribed, however, we maintain a customer waiting list.

## 10. IS YOUR HOME ENERGY EFFICIENT?

Your biggest savings will always be the energy that you don't use. By maximizing your home's energy efficiency first, you can be sure the electricity generated by your solar electric system is not lost through leaky ductwork, inadequate insulation or an inefficient heating and cooling system. Sign up for our Home Energy Check-up to get recommendations on ways that you can improve your home's energy efficiency. Go to [DominionEnergySC.com/HomeCheckup](https://www.dominionenergy.com/HomeCheckup) or call 1-877-510-7234.

For more information, go to our solar website at [DominionEnergySC.com/Solar](https://www.dominionenergy.com/Solar). Look for and download *A Consumers' Guide to Solar for the South Carolina Homeowner*.