

Ten Tips for Choosing the Right Solar Installer in the United States

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August 30, 2010 | [3 Comments](#)

Deciding to install solar panels on your home is a big investment: you make a payment now and expect a substantial return in the future. One way to ensure return on your investment and success of your solar panels is to make sure you hire the right solar installer who can guide you through the entire solar installation process: everything from financing and finding the right rebates and incentives to installation and maintenance.

Here are ten tips on what to look for in the right solar installer:

1. Certification: One way to ensure a proper solar installation is to see whether your solar installer is certified with the North American Board of Certified Energy Practitioners or the [NABCEP](#). Right now, the NABCEP is probably the best standard certification program in the U.S. and those installers that receive have had to pass a rigorous set of tests in order to receive it. Not only does the NABCEP include require an installer to pass an exam but it also requires them to have two years of prior solar installation experience. Click the above link to find a list of NABCEP certified installers in your area.

If you run across a solar installer who is not certified they may either (a) have years of experience and do not care to spend the money to become “certified” or (b) took classes at a solar institution. With those installers that rely on their experience to demonstrate their quality and reputation, make sure to ask for as many references as possible from their prior solar customers to review (make sure you get a spectrum of references in terms of time such as recent installations to customers from a couple of years prior). With those solar installers who have simply taken classes at a solar institution, make sure that the training was completed at an established solar institution, such as the [Solar Living Institute](#) or [Solar Energy International](#) and have had hands-on experience from NABCEP certified teachers. Don't be afraid to ask for proof of qualifications in this instance or contact the NABCEP to make sure that the solar installer in question has received the claimed educational qualifications.

2. Licenses/Insurance: In case of an accident during installation, it is important that your solar installer has the proper licenses and insurance to ensure that you are not liable. At a bare minimum, your solar installer should have general liability insurance, worker's compensation insurance and a contractor's license. If they don't have these basic business protections, it's probably a sign that this particular solar installer is not a quality business. ::continue::

3. Check out the [Better Business Bureau \(BBB\)](#): To help get a general rating for the solar installer you are considering, the BBB provides you with a basic rating of the company and whether there have been any complaints registered against the solar installer. This is another way of understanding a company's reputation. BBB allows you to avoid solar installers who may sound good on paper but fall short of expectations when in action.

4. Subcontracting: Does your solar installer subcontract any of their work? This is important because while you may trust your solar installer, you may not trust the subcontractor. If the solar installer you are considering subcontracts even a portion of their work, you should check whether the subcontractor is certified with NABCEP as well.

5. Location, location, location: Where is the solar installer location in relation to the building you're looking to put solar on? This not only determines the cost of the solar installer but also how familiar they are with your area. It is crucial for the solar installer to know your area so they are privy to applicable local codes and typical weather patterns and also so that they can help with the maintenance of your solar system down the road. It's also easier to review references and

physically look at the solar installer's prior work if they operate near where you are.

6. Payment Options: Request multiple competitive bids for your solar system and that make sure that each bid explicitly indicates what the payback and the monthly savings on your electric bill will be. Make sure that it is clear how much of your electricity needs will be coming from solar and that you factor this when comparing bids as a solar system that provides 50% of your power needs will be cheaper than one that provides 90%. Also, ask whether on-going maintenance is included in the cost of your solar system or whether that is an additional charge. Your solar installer (or the sales rep) should be fluent on the different financing options (ie. out right purchase, lease, power purchase agreement) available and they should explain how any financing costs will impact the monthly savings on your electric bills resulting from solar power. You need to feel totally comfortable that economically it makes sense in the short term and long terms for you to investment in solar.

7. Brands Used: Make sure your installer is familiar with the brand of solar panel they are installing. There is nothing more nerve-wracking than being a guinea pig so make sure you verify with your solar installer which brands they prefer using and why. NABCEP can help you identify which models and brands your installer is certified to use.

8. Warranty: As with any product you buy, always check the warranty. Since solar panels take about 5 to 10 years to payback, the warranty should at least be 10 years. This includes the overall warranty of the system (which generally is 20 to 25 years) and the warranty that ensures that the solar installer will fix your panels should anything malfunction (typically for about 5 years).

9. Overall Impression: Do you feel confident with this solar installer? Are you satisfied with their answers to your questions and how quickly they responded? How responsive was their customer service representatives to your questions and were you comfortable with their responses? You should harbor no doubts or confusion before committing to a solar installer. This is particularly important as installing solar power is a big deal and the solar installer you pick needs to be more than just someone doing work on your home, they should be a partner to help make sure that your investment into solar is easy, long lasting and financially worthwhile. In the end, beyond the assurances of experience and certification, only you can decide whether this solar installer "feels" like the right choice.

10. Get Help Finding Solar Installers: Solar Energy matching services can also take much of the guess work out of selecting a solar installer. There are several free matching services that connect you with pre-selected and highly reputable solar installers based. The process is simple: you provide basic information on your location and project type and within minutes or up to 1-2 business days the qualified solar installers will contact you to bid on your project. These services have saved homeowners time and the headache of dealing with poor quality installers. For example, see www.solar-energy-installers.com.

Courtesy: www.myenergysolution.com - [Choosing Solar Installer](#)

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