

# SOLAR CHECKLIST

## FOR CHOOSING AN INSTALLER

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***Congrats! You've decided to save with solar... but how do you choose your installer?***

Here's a checklist with guidelines for selecting the right company for your solar project. These tips and questions will help you identify those companies who have the experience, quality products, trained personnel and financial strength you want.

The quality of the installer and equipment you select will directly affect your long-term savings and the system's reliability.

Pick the right combination and you'll be setup for decades of success!

## Quick Tips for Getting Started

1. Do your homework. Make sure you are getting the best equipment and service from the best company.
2. Watch out for high-pressure closing companies. Do not proceed if the price is "only good for the next 12 hours" or "they can get you a commercial discount if you sign today". There are more companies than you think using pressure to charge high prices.
3. Never e-sign a contract from a salesperson you haven't met. Solar installers that don't inspect your home BEFORE obligating you to a contract are only interested in the sale.
4. Ask for a copy of the contractor's and subcontractor's license, liability insurance and worker's comp policies. If they're not properly licensed or insured you could be liable for damages or injuries.
5. Evaluate all of your financing options. Is a lease, PPA, loan or cash purchase right for you? Don't sign a contract until you have reviewed your options because it may cost you tens of thousands in savings.



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### 1. HOW LONG HAS THE COMPANY BEEN INSTALLING SOLAR SYSTEMS?

Solar Technologies was founded in 1998 and is one of the longest tenured solar installers in California and widely recognized as one of the leading installers in the Bay Area.

### 2. HOW MANY SOLAR SYSTEMS HAS THE COMPANY SOLD & INSTALLED IN THE BAY AREA?

Many companies only sell systems, some only install and some, like us, do everything in house and do it very well. We have helped more than 2,500 Bay Area home and business owners save with solar through our offices in San Ramon and Santa Cruz, making us one of the Bay Area leaders in systems installed.

### 3. HOW DOES THE COMPANY APPROACH EMPLOYEE TRAINING?

Quality and safety come first in everything we do. This is why we self-perform all of our work. We are NABCEP certified and a SunPower Master Dealer which requires that all of our solar advisors, designers and installers achieve and maintain advanced level training certifications. All of our employees have been with us for years and are certified solar experts.



### 4. IS THE COMPANY REVIEWING MY ELECTRICAL USAGE, FUTURE NEEDS & BUDGET TO CUSTOMIZE A SYSTEM?

We take a consultative approach on every job and work with the customer to clearly understand their electrical usage, future needs, and site requirements. We work with our customers to understand their needs and only then provide the appropriate options so they can make an informed decision about their best option.

### 5. IS THE COMPANY AN ESTABLISHED CONTRACTOR WITH FULL DESIGN-BUILD CAPABILITIES OR DO THEY FOCUS PRIMARILY ON SALES?

The solar industry has its fair share of sales and marketing companies trying to get rich by signing as many contracts as possible. These sales shops are great at selling systems but rarely have design/build experience and typically sell your system to another contractor for a commission. You end up not knowing who you're actually working with or who is going to service and maintain your system if there's a problem. We handle every step of the process, self-perform all of our work and have been supporting thousands of customers for 17 years.

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### 6. WHERE IS THE COMPANY'S HEADQUARTERS, DO THEY HAVE A SUITABLE FACILITY & WILL THEY LET YOU VISIT?

There are more than 2,000 solar installers in California and on average they sell less than a system a month, operate on shoe-string budgets and don't make it to their fifth anniversary. You'll only find a few doing it as long as we have and with 17 years of experience and full-service facilities strategically located in Santa Cruz and San Ramon we are well positioned to service and support any home or business owner in the Bay Area. Visit our office anytime to meet the teams and see products in our inventory.

### 7. HAS THE COMPANY BEEN PROFITABLE FOR THE LAST 5 YEARS, DO THEY HAVE ANY DEBT AND HOW HEALTHY IS THEIR BALANCE SHEET?

Choosing a financially stable company is critical because your system will last more than 25 years and you want someone to be there to service or maintain your investment if necessary. We have been profitable for the last 5 years, carry no debt, with a healthy balance sheet and have been supporting our customers for nearly two decades. You can bet we'll be around when you need us and we're often called to service systems installed by companies no longer in business.

### 8. DOES THE COMPANY DO BUSINESS IN OTHER STATES OR REGIONS?

Solar is a thin margin business and we have seen many companies try to establish a state-wide or national footprint and fail. In fact, the only ones who have succeeded are those running up tens of million in debt a year as public or private equity backed companies. The margins simply aren't large enough to support duplicative costs and bloated management teams. We prefer to follow a disciplined strategy focused on helping Bay Area home and business owners save with solar by providing the best equipment and service at a competitive price. 17 years of this strategy has resulted in more than 40% of our business coming from referrals and managing our costs to ensure profitability every year has allowed us to thrive when many others have failed.

Thousands  
of  
Customers



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### 9. DOES THE COMPANY FOCUS SOLELY ON SOLAR INSTALLATIONS OR IS SOLAR A SIDE BUSINESS?

As solar has become more popular it seems like every contractor is hanging an “and solar” sign behind their name. These companies rarely have the necessary certifications, training or knowledge to provide high quality service and reliable systems to their customers. We have been solely focused on solar electric systems since 1998 and provide customers with leading edge technology installed by our own employees who are certified experts.

### 10. WHAT CONTRACTING LICENSE(S) DOES THE COMPANY HAVE & WHAT IS THE STATUS OF THAT LICENSE?

To protect yourself you must absolutely check to see if the company you’re working with is licensed with the Contractor’s State License Board, in good standing and legally able to sell and install a solar power system. You can check your contractor’s license at [cslb.ca.gov](http://cslb.ca.gov) **Do not allow any contractor or subcontractor to start work without providing proof of their active license.**

### 11. IS THE COMPANY A LICENSED C-10 ELECTRICAL CONTRACTOR?

A C-10 Electrical License is the license to look for when hiring a solar installer because this is the only license that requires a contractor to be fully trained on electrical systems and certified to work on both the DC and AC side of your system. If you do not hire a C-10 electrician, and there are damages to persons or property, your insurance company can deny the claim for hiring an unqualified contractor to perform unlicensed work. We are a C-10 Electrical and C-46 Solar licensed contractor (CSLB# 932914).



### 12. IS THE COMPANY A GENERAL B CONTRACTOR? IF SO, ARE THEY HIRING AT LEAST TWO SUBCONTRACTORS?

General B contractors are able to market and sell solar electric systems ONLY if they subcontract the installation to a C-10 Electrician or C-46 Solar and a C-39 Roofing contractor. If not, the General B contractor is violating state law and your insurance provider can deny any claims.

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### 13. WHAT LEVEL OF INSURANCE DOES THE COMPANY HAVE IN PLACE TO PROTECT YOU?

Solar Technologies is covered by \$2,000,000 of general liability insurance, \$1,000,000 of automobile insurance, \$1,000,000 of workers compensation insurance and \$200,000 of construction insurance and we provide our customers with copies of our insurance certificates before we start any work. It is your responsibility to make sure that all of your contractors and subcontractors have sufficient insurance coverage to protect you and your home. **Do not allow any contractor or subcontractor to start work without providing proof of insurance.**

### 14. IS THE COMPANY USING SUBCONTRACTORS? IF SO, WHO ARE THEY & WHY CAN'T THE COMPANY SELF-PERFORM THEIR WORK?

Solar sales and marketing companies will trick you into thinking they do everything when they're really just selling your contract to a construction company for a commission. If they can't self-perform your install it is likely because they do not have the resources, personnel, expertise or equipment necessary. And, if they're subcontracting your installation you are legally covered by the subcontractor's license and insurance. **Do not sign a contract without a written guarantee that the company will not subcontract your install.** If they are going to subcontract the install require that they provide the subcontractor's license and insurance information before signing. **At Solar Technologies, we self-perform all of our work because it is the right way to do the job.**

### 15. WHAT LICENSE(S) & LEVEL OF INSURANCE DO THE SUBCONTRACTORS HAVE? WILL THE COMPANY GUARANTEE THAT SUBCONTRACTORS WILL NOT LIEN YOUR HOME?

If the company selling you a system can't install the system then why would you work with them? If they are going to subcontract your installation do you really know who you're working with? **It is absolutely necessary that you get copies of every subcontractor's license and insurance certificates before signing a contract so you will be protected under the subcontractor while the work is being performed.** Additionally, in California every subcontractor has the right to lien your home and even foreclose on the property if they are not paid in full by the prime contractor. **You should require, without exception, an "Unconditional Lien Release" from the company selling you a system before any work is performed.**



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### 16. IS THE COMPANY PROVIDING YOU WITH THE LATEST & MOST RELIABLE TECHNOLOGY? ARE THE MANUFACTURERS BASED IN THE U.S.?

Not all solar equipment is created equal. The quality of the equipment and installation will determine your long-term reliability and savings. Don't get fooled into saving a little money upfront on lesser quality equipment only to have your system fall short of expectations in future years. We are proud to offer Sunpower panels and were handpicked by SunPower as their only Master Dealer in the Bay Area because of our customer service record, installation quality, employee training and long history of success. **Solar Technologies offers the world's best solar panels installed by the Bay Area's best installation team.**

### 17. HOW DOES THE COMPANY DETERMINE WHAT EQUIPMENT TO OFFER AND HAVE THEY INFORMED YOU OF ANY LOOP HOLES IN THE WARRANTIES?

At Solar Technologies, we don't just design and build your system, we also monitor and review our installations to make sure they are saving our customers money. With more than 2,500 systems installed over 17 years, we possess a depth of unmatched experience in the Bay Area. We know what works, we know what doesn't work and we know what to look out for. For example, did you know nearly every panel manufacturer other than SunPower will make you pay to package and ship the module to them if you have a warranty claim? They may also have "marine environment" exemptions that void their warranties! **SunPower guarantees 87.5% production in the 25th year and covers the costs to remove, ship, replace and reinstall your panels if there is ever a problem.**



### 18. DOES THE COMPANY KEEP AN INVENTORY OF PANELS, INVERTERS & RACKING ON HAND?

The solar industry has a storied history of supply shortages. Federal tax credits are expiring in 2016, so you need to make sure the company will have products on hand to complete your installation. A reputable solar company should have 8-12 weeks of inventory. If they don't, it might be an indication that they don't have enough work or they suffer from weak cash flow. **Solar Technologies maintains two large, well-stocked warehouses in Santa Cruz and San Ramon. We ensure that our residential and commercial customers are never inconvenienced.**

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### 19. HAS THE COMPANY BEEN AROUND LONGER THAN THEIR WORKMANSHIP WARRANTY & WILL THEY BE ABLE TO HONOR IT?

Nearly every solar installer offers a 10-15 year workmanship warranty but that is only as good as the company behind it. How long has the company been installing solar power systems? Are they financially stable and do they have a business that will last? With 17 years of experience, thousands of installations and healthy fundamentals, we are one of a very few solar contractors in the Bay Area that have been in operation longer than our warranties.

**Solar Technologies will be there when you need us.**

### 20. HOW DOES THE COMPANY HANDLE SERVICE REQUESTS & REPAIRS?

If you install the right equipment in the right way then your solar system should operate without incident for many years. But, what if something does go wrong? If it ever does, you want a company that has a dedicated and experienced service department that can quickly diagnose and resolve issues in the field.

**Solar Technologies has a dedicated service department and we make every effort to correct any issue in the shortest amount of time possible.**



### 21. DOES THE COMPANY HAVE A LARGE PORTFOLIO OF COMMERCIAL PROJECTS & A SUCCESSFUL COMMERCIAL DIVISION?

Does the company have a proven track record of successfully installing and maintaining commercial systems? A healthy solar installer has the expertise and resources to handle your commercial installation. Solar Technologies is one of the Bay Area's best commercial installers with customers such as the Oakland Zoo, public school districts, state agencies and many other businesses and non-profit entities. Our commercial experience is also integrated into our residential best practices. **We take pride in the level of service we provide to both our commercial and residential customers!**

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### 22. HOW DOES THE COMPANY SELECT THE FINANCING PARTNERS & SOLUTIONS OFFERED?

#### DO THEY RECEIVE INCENTIVES FOR PROMOTING CERTAIN PRODUCTS?

There are a lot of solar financing options available today, everything from loans, to leases, to PACE and finally power purchase agreements. It is very common for solar companies to push a single financing product that makes them the most money even if it's not in the customer's best interest. You should be very cautious about any company that only recommends a solar lease or PPA as these are the most costly options available. At Solar Technologies we are not incentivized by any of our financing options. **Solar Technologies work with you to identify your needs and recommend the most appropriate financing option that maximizes your solar savings.**

Financing Options	Upfront Payment	Claim Tax Incentives	Credit Score Requirements	Financing Term	Ownership Option	20 Year Maintenance
Cash Purchase	✓	✓			✓	
Low Interest Rate Loans		✓	700+	5-20 Years	✓	
PACE Loans		✓	Home Ownership	5-20 Years	✓	
SunPower Lease			680+	20+ Years		✓



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	Company A	Company B	Notes
1. How long has the company been installing solar systems?			
2. How many solar systems has the company sold and installed in the bay area?			
3. How does the company approach employee training?			
4. Is the company reviewing my electrical usage, future needs and budget to customize a system?			
5. Is the company an established contractor with full design-build capabilities or do they focus primarily on sales.			
6. Where is the company's headquarters, do they have a suitable facility and will they let you visit?			
7. Has the company been profitable for the last 5 years, do they have any debt and how healthy is their balance sheet?			
8. Does the company do business in other states or regions?			
9. Does the company focus solely on solar installations or is it a side business?			
10. What contracting license(s) does the company have and what is the status?			
11. Is the company a licensed c-10 electrical contractor?			
12. Is the company a General B Contractor? If so, are they hiring at least two subcontractors?			

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	Company A	Company B	Notes
13. What level of insurance does the company have in place to protect you?			
14. Is the company using subcontractors? If so, who are they and why can't the company self-perform their work?			
15. What license(s) and level of insurance do the subcontractors have? Will the company guarantee that subcontractors will not lien your home?			
16. Is the company providing you with the latest and most reliable technology? Are the manufacturers based in the U.S.?			
17. How does the company determine what equipment to offer and have they informed you of any loop holes in the warranties?			
18. Does the company keep an inventory of panels, inverters and racks on hand?			
19. Has the company been around longer than their workmanship warranty and will they be able to honor it?			
20. How does the company handle service requests and repairs?			
21. Does the company have a large portfolio of commercial projects and a successful commercial division?			
22. How does the company select the financing partners and solutions offered? Do they receive incentives for promoting certain products?			