

! The Solar Buyer's Survival Guide !



23 Costly Solar Mistakes (and How to Avoid Them Before You Sign Anything)

*A plain-English checklist for homeowners
who want solar to actually pay off — not disappoint.*



The Meta-Mistake (The Big One)

Avoid rushing.

Every bad solar outcome shares one root cause:

Decisions made under time pressure or sales pressure.

The best solar systems are built by people who pause, verify, and understand just enough to stay in control.



Why This Guide Exists

Most people who regret going solar don't regret *solar*.
They regret **what they didn't know before installing it**.

Sales pitches sound great. Projections look impressive.
But hidden mistakes — made *before* the panels ever go up — quietly destroy savings, flexibility, and peace of mind.

This guide exists to prevent that.

No hype.

No brand pushing.

Just the real mistakes that cost homeowners thousands — and how to avoid them.

How to Use This Guide

Use this as:

- A **pre-quote checklist**
- A **sales-call filter**
- A **decision confidence tool**

If an installer can't answer these points clearly, that's a signal — not a coincidence.

PART 1: The 23 Biggest Solar Mistakes Most People Make

1. Installing Solar Without Understanding Your Own Energy Use

Solar designed without 12 months of usage data is a guess — not a plan.

Avoid it:

Know your kWh history, seasonal spikes, and future needs (EVs, heat pumps, home offices).

2. Choosing the Cheapest Quote

Cheap systems often cost more long term.

Avoid it:

Compare equipment quality, warranties, and installer reputation — not just price.

3. Ignoring Roof Condition and Orientation

Solar on a failing roof = double labor later.

Avoid it:

If your roof won't last 10–15 years, replace it first.

4. Underestimating Shading

Even small shade can reduce output dramatically.

Avoid it:

Demand a proper shade analysis and the right inverter design.

5. Letting the Installer Choose the Inverter by Default

Inverters determine performance, monitoring, and future upgrades.

Avoid it:

Understand string vs micro vs hybrid — and why your system uses one.

6. Falling for “\$0 Down” Financing

Low upfront cost often hides high long-term cost.

Avoid it:

Compare total 20–25 year cost, not monthly payments.

7. Misunderstanding Solar Tax Credit

It's a **tax credit**, not a cash rebate.

Avoid it:

Confirm you can actually use it before counting on it.



8. Overbuying Batteries Without a Clear Use Case

Batteries are powerful — and expensive.

Avoid it:

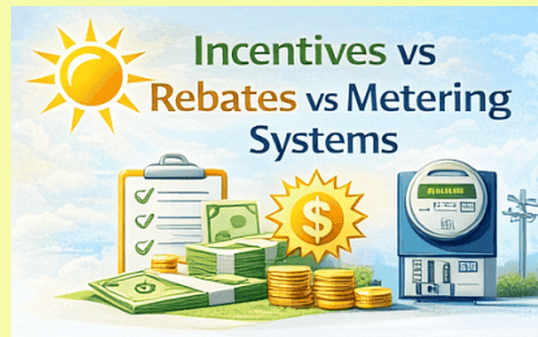
Only add batteries if outages, TOU rates, or evening usage justify them.

9. Ignoring Utility Rules and Net Metering

Export rules matter more than panel count.

Avoid it:

Understand how your utility credits (or limits) solar exports.



10. Confusing Manufacturer Warranties With Installer Warranties

A 25-year panel warranty won't fix bad installation.

Avoid it:

Insist on a strong workmanship warranty from a stable installer.

11. Assuming All Panels Are the Same

They aren't.

Avoid it:

Look at degradation rates, manufacturer stability, and real-world performance.

12. Relying Only on Salespeople for Education

Sales incentives ≠ your best outcome.

Avoid it:

Learn just enough to ask smart questions — then verify.

PART 2: The Hidden Mistakes That Kill Long-Term Success

These don't show up on quotes — but they determine whether solar *wins* or quietly fails.

13. Treating Solar as a One-Time Purchase

Solar is a system, not a gadget.

Avoid it:

Design for future upgrades and changing energy needs.



14. Ignoring Monitoring and Performance Data

Silent underperformance is common.

Avoid it:

Use monitoring and check it regularly.

15. Letting Permits and PTO Drag On

Every delay is lost savings.

Avoid it:

Track permits, inspections, and Permission to Operate.



16. Designing for Averages Instead of Reality

Average days don't pay bills.

Avoid it:

Stress-test your system for worst months and peak demand.

17. Assuming "Maintenance-Free" Means Zero Attention

Low maintenance \neq no maintenance.

Avoid it:

Plan for inverter replacement, inspections, and occasional cleaning.

18. Ignoring Household Behavior

How you use power matters as much as how you produce it.

Avoid it:

Shift loads to daylight hours where possible.

19. Overcomplicating the System

More tech = more failure points.

Avoid it:

Choose proven, simple designs with upgrade paths.

20. Choosing an Installer With No Long-Term Accountability

Many won't be around in year 10.

Avoid it:

Favor local, established companies with service departments.

21. Believing Perfect ROI Projections

Reality always changes.

Avoid it:

Look for conservative estimates and flexible designs.



22. Ignoring Exit Scenarios

Solar affects resale more than people expect.

Avoid it:

Understand transferability, buyouts, and liens.

23. Confusing Energy Independence With Energy Immunity

Not all solar systems work during outages.

Avoid it:

Design backup intentionally — not by assumption.



The Biggest Mistake of All? **Rushing.**

Every bad solar story starts with pressure:

- “This incentive ends soon”
- “Prices go up tomorrow”
- “You have to decide now”

Good solar decisions are calm, informed, and deliberate.

...Ok, so that's 24 mistakes.



Final Thought

Solar rewards **prepared homeowners**
and punishes rushed ones.

If you avoid these mistakes, solar doesn't just
reduce bills —
it becomes a long-term advantage.



The Solar Buyer's Checklist

23 Things to Verify *Before* You Go Solar

Use this checklist to avoid costly mistakes, bad contracts, and disappointing results.
If you can confidently check these off, you're doing solar the *right* way.

ENERGY & USAGE BASICS

- I've reviewed **at least 12 months** of electric bills
- I understand my **average monthly and annual kWh usage**
- I've identified **seasonal peaks** (summer AC, winter heating, etc.)
- I've considered future changes (EVs, heat pumps, home office)

ROOF & SITE READINESS

- My roof has **10–15+ years of life remaining**
- Roof orientation and tilt have been evaluated
- A **shade analysis** was performed (not just eyeballed)
- Tree growth and future shading were considered

SYSTEM DESIGN & EQUIPMENT

- System size is based on **actual usage**, not sales targets
- I understand why this **inverter type** was chosen
- Panel brand is **Tier-1** with a solid track record
- System design allows for **future expansion or upgrades**

BATTERIES & BACKUP (IF APPLICABLE)

- I know **why** I want a battery (outages, TOU rates, evening use)
- Battery size matches **realistic needs**, not fear
- Backup capability (islanding, critical loads) is clearly defined
- I understand battery lifespan and replacement expectations



FINANCING & INCENTIVES

- I compared **cash, loan, lease, and PPA** options
- I reviewed the **total 20–25 year cost**, not just monthly payments
- Dealer fees and escalators were disclosed
- I confirmed I can actually use the **federal solar tax credit**

UTILITY, PERMITS & POLICY

- I understand my utility's **net metering or export rules**
- System design accounts for **current and future utility policies**
- I know who handles permits, inspections, and interconnection
- I am tracking progress toward **Permission to Operate (PTO)**

WARRANTIES & INSTALLER QUALITY

- Panel, inverter, and battery warranties were explained clearly
- I verified the **workmanship warranty** (not just equipment)
- Installer has a **local presence** and long operating history
- I know who to contact for service **years from now**

PERFORMANCE & MONITORING

- Monitoring is included and accessible to me
- I know what “normal” production looks like
- Alerts or regular checks are planned
- I understand expected inverter replacement timelines

REAL-WORLD USE & EXPECTATIONS

- I understand how **household behavior** affects savings
- I plan to shift loads to daytime where possible
- ROI projections were presented as **ranges**, not guarantees
- Worst-case months and peak demand were discussed

FUTURE & EXIT PLANNING

- I understand how solar affects **home resale**
- Any loans, liens, or leases are transferable or buyout-friendly
- I know the difference between **energy independence** and full backup
- I'm not rushing due to sales pressure or fake urgency

FINAL CHECK

- I asked questions — and received clear answers
- I verified claims independently
- I feel informed, not pressured
- I'm confident this system fits my life — not just today, but years ahead

→ **Avoid locked systems and hidden limitations. Compare quotes, pros and cons before investing.**

Final Reminder

*Most solar regrets come from what wasn't checked,
not what was installed.*

Slow down. Verify. Decide with confidence.

More tools, calculators, and solar decision guides:

 www.navigatingsolar.com



Thank you

for joining us on this journey!

We hope that this guide proves helpful in finding your place in the sun and making the most of it.

But this is not the end, my friend!

Visit our website

www.navigatingsolar.com

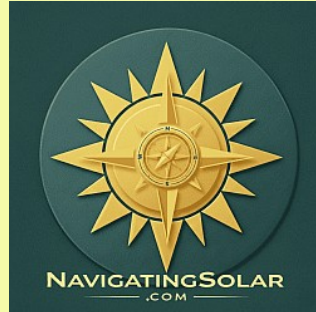
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