



Before you invest in a solar energy system, there are several things to consider to ensure you're making an informed decision. Follow our checklist to help decide if solar panels are a fit for your home.

## IS SOLAR RIGHT FOR ME?

- **Does my home have clear and unobstructed access to sunlight for most, or all, of the day, throughout the year?** Solar output is maximized when panels are south-facing and there is direct access to sunlight all day long.
- **Do I have a large enough roof or area to accommodate the system I need?** Solar arrays are a best fit on homes with large areas of uninterrupted roof space (no pipes or satellite dishes).
- **How old is my roof?** You want your roof to be relatively new and in good shape to support your system. Panels would need to be removed and reinstalled if you have to replace the roof or shingles after your rooftop solar system is installed.
- **Does my community have any covenants in place that prohibit solar panels?** We recommend checking with your HOA before accepting any bids from contractors.
- **How long do I plan to stay in my home?** While the payback period on solar panels varies based on the installation, it typically takes several years. While solar has been proven to increase home values, this is still an important consideration so that you can get the most out of your investment.
- **What are my goals with solar?** If you're looking to offset 100% of your energy use instead of a small portion, your solar investment will look very different.
- **How efficient is my home?** By reducing your overall energy use, you can reduce the size of the solar system you need, potentially saving thousands of dollars in upfront costs. Members may request a free on-site energy audit or order a Do It Yourself Kit at [cobbemc.com/audit](https://cobbemc.com/audit). There are many low and no-cost energy efficiency solutions, or you may choose to invest upfront to save later on bigger improvements such as adding attic insulation.
- **What Cobb EMC rate plan am I on? How much am I paying for electricity?** Because Cobb EMC's rates are among the lowest in the state, the dollar amounts you will save on your monthly expense may be minor, extending your payback period for rooftop solar. See all of your rate options at [cobbemc.com/rates](https://cobbemc.com/rates).

## GATHER COSTS FROM CONTRACTORS

Solar panels are a long term investment, lasting 25 years or more, and a solar investment can be costly. Making the decision to invest in solar should not be taken lightly. In order to assess the payback on your solar system, be sure to ask your contractor the right questions:

- **How much will the solar array cost?** Cobb EMC recommends obtaining at least three quotes from local, reputable contractors. Depending on your specific needs and location, there are a number of factors that affect the cost of a rooftop solar array, including system size and installation complexity. Your contractor will be able to help assess your home's needs. During the contracting process, be wary of any contractor that makes promises that sound too good to be true, such as \$0 down, or ditching your electric bill completely.
- **How much should I expect to spend on maintenance? Is that already included in my contract?** Panels can last 25 years or more and will require maintenance, like inverter replacement and having the PV panels cleaned.
- **Does my roof need replacing?** Rooftop solar panels are drilled into your roof directly making it important to ensure that your roof is in good condition to physically support solar panels. Roof replacement can cost \$10,000 to 20,000 or more, so it is an important factor to consider. You should obtain at least three quotes to make an informed decision.
- **Do I need to remove any trees to achieve maximum solar production?** Tree removal can range from \$100 to \$5,000 or more depending on the amount and size of trees that you are looking to remove. Multiple quotes are recommended to help you decide.

## EXPLORE POTENTIAL BENEFITS

- **Are there any tax incentives available?** The best place to find up-to-date information on available tax incentives is the Database of State Incentives for Renewable Energy ([dsireusa.org](http://dsireusa.org)).
- **If I produce more power than I need, how much will Cobb EMC buy it back for?** If your solar system is sized properly, you should not produce more power than you need. However, if you do occasionally produce more, Cobb EMC will buy it back from you at the rate specified in the Distributed Generation Policy, which can be found at [cobbemc.com/rates](http://cobbemc.com/rates).
- **What are my solar goals?** Are you looking to save money? If so, knowing your costs and benefits is very important. If you are choosing solar for environmental reasons, the non-monetary benefits, such as doing good for the planet, may be more important to you.

## COMMON MYTHS, DEBUNKED.

- **Solar will eliminate my electric bill.** While solar can produce significant savings, you will still depend on Cobb EMC for some of your power and will therefore still pay a monthly electric bill.
- **With solar, I will have power even during a power outage.** This is simply not true. To keep our linemen safe, when the power goes out, your solar panels will automatically turn off so that they do not backfeed onto the grid. This means that your home will also be without power during outage events unless you also have a battery storage system.
- **My solar panels will pay for themselves very quickly.** Using the information provided in this checklist, you can calculate the payback period for your solar investment. While payback will occur, it may take longer than you initially expect thanks to Cobb EMC's low rates.

## QUESTIONS ABOUT SOLAR?

Learn more about solar energy at [cobbemc.com/solar](http://cobbemc.com/solar) or contact Cobb EMC's energy advisors, Jeff Mason and Michael Blair, at 770-429-2125 or [gogreen@cobbemc.com](mailto:gogreen@cobbemc.com).