

# 8 Things To Consider When Choosing Your Solar Installer



**Use this form as a checklist. If you work your way through these while the installer is at your property, the items on this list will make the suspect installers squirm. The upstanding companies will pass with flying colors.**



**Do they try and get you to sign something or give a deposit during their first visit?**

Red flag city! What's the rush? There is virtually no good reason why you should have to sign anything during an installer's first visit. Could it be that they want to lock you into something, before you have time to see that there are better deals available? Take your time, shop around, and pick the best fit. Anyone who has a problem with that should be taken off your list of contenders.



**What kind of references do they make available?**

Every installer will have at least a few happy customers to point you to. The exceptional ones can provide at least 2 dozen, if not more. You want a list that you can pick from, to insure that the ones you're calling haven't been pre-selected. Also, [Solarreviews.com](http://Solarreviews.com) is a very reputable site for checking on other customers' experiences.



**Do they offer a price guarantee?**

Many companies hit you with "surprise" extra expenditures ("change-orders"), after the job has begun. If an unforeseen issue arises which affects the installation, you'd much prefer an installer with the confidence to guarantee their final price, rather than passing any extra costs on to you. This is rare.



**What kind of Licenses and other qualifications do the installers have?**

A C-10 Electrical Contractor's License is the highest level of certification. C-10's are experienced professionals qualified to handle all aspects of electrical contracting, including solar electric system design and installation. If you have questions about a contractor's license, verify it online here:

<http://www2.cslb.ca.gov/OnlineServices/CheckLicenseRequest.asp>



**Are there clauses in the contract that protect you against "bait and switch"?**

A reputable solar contractor will never bait and switch. Unfortunately, it's not so uncommon for an installer to write up a contract listing Part X (which is expensive and has a great reputation), but with a clause that allows them to substitute in Part Y (which is cheaper and has a s hoddy reputation), without notifying you OR correspondingly lowering your price.



**Will they be doing an extensive location inspection prior to installation?**

Many companies don't do the legwork necessary to identify potential issues such as:

- insufficient electrical service to handle a solar energy system
- potential roof size and/or condition issues
- potential shading issues
- other possible installation issues

In some cases, this lack of thoroughness is simply intended to save them time. In the worst instances, it's a ploy that conveniently allows the installer to tack on charges down the road.



**How long are the warranties?**

Most companies offer a 10 year warranty on central inverters, and 20-25 years on the panels. Ideally, you should strive for 15 years on central inverters (25 for micro-inverters), and 25 years on the panels. Furthermore, does the contractor deal with the manufacturer on your behalf regarding product warranties, or leave it you to sort things out if something goes wrong?



**Are the promised rebates based on EPBB printouts?**

Some installers have been known to write up an "estimated" rebate, only to have it mysteriously shrink once the final paperwork is produced. You want an estimate that's based on official numbers straight from the EPBB, and guaranteed in writing by your solar contractor.