

Don't Make These Mistakes When Getting Solar

Introduction

At Carbon Central, we want to make sure you're set up for success when starting your solar journey. That means helping you steer clear of common pitfalls, avoid costly mistakes, and ask the right questions along the way.

This guide is packed with everything you need to choose the best solar equipment, boost your savings, and find the perfect installer with confidence. Switching to solar is a big decision, so it's crucial to be informed, ask the right questions, and make sure the company you're investing in is up to the task.

We want our customers to have all the knowledge they need to make an informed decision, and that's why we're sharing this guide on mistakes to avoid when getting solar.

Drawing on data from our extensive network of customers and surveyors, we've identified some of the common ways solar installations can go wrong — and, more importantly, how you can dodge those issues.

We'll walk you through every stage of the solar process, shedding light on the myths, jargon, and easily avoidable mistakes that can trip you up.

So, let's dive in!



Research Mistakes

First, let's take a look at the typical mistakes people make during the research phase of their solar journey.

Being aware of these common errors will help you set off on the right track.

Searching for the wrong solar products

When searching for solar solutions, using broad terms like “solar panels” or “solar power” can steer you in the wrong direction. While these searches may provide a general overview, they can also lead to outdated solar tech or thermal solar systems, which use liquid-filled tubes to heat water, rather than generating electricity.

If you're looking to power your home, you need photovoltaic (PV) solar panels, not thermal systems. PV solar panels convert sunlight into electricity, making them ideal for home use. Also, steer clear of commercial or large-scale solar information, as these systems are more costly, complex, and intended for businesses or investors.

Focus your research on terms like ‘residential solar panels,’ or ‘PV solar system costs for homes’ to find the best solutions for your property.

Don't just rely on internet searches

While Google or Bing can be a great place to start, the web can also be full of confusing or misleading information. Some websites might look independent but are actually lead-generation sites trying to sell your details to solar companies.

We're not saying the internet won't help, but it's wise to back up your research with trusted sources like Trustpilot, MCS, and Citizens Advice. These will offer unbiased and reliable guidance to help you make the right decision for your home.

Location, location, location

Where you live in the UK affects how you get the most from your solar panels, but that doesn't mean you're limited to a local installer. Different parts of the UK have varying weather patterns and sunlight levels, with Cornwall getting much more sun than Scotland for instance.

A knowledgeable installer will make sure your solar system is optimised for the amount of sunlight your area receives. Most parts of the UK are well-suited for solar panels, but a good company will help you get the best out of what's available in your area.

Be aware of solar's environmental impact

We all know solar power is a cleaner energy alternative, but it's not entirely impact-free. By understanding this early on, you can ensure your system is as eco-friendly as possible.

The solar industry is evolving, with more emphasis being placed on recycling panels and sustainable materials. As recycling programs become more common in the UK, check with your installer about end-of-life options for your panels.

If you're also considering a battery storage system, be sure to ask about the ethical sourcing of materials like lithium and cobalt. Carbon Central prides itself on working with manufacturers that prioritize sustainability, but it's always a good idea to ask.

Stay updated on solar tech

Solar technology is advancing rapidly. Just a decade ago, Polycrystalline panels were common, but now most reputable installers, including Carbon Central, recommend Monocrystalline panels for homes.

There are even different types of Monocrystalline panels, such as bifacial and PERC, which provide better performance. You'll also see N-Type and P-Type Monocrystalline panels; N-Type is pricier but has lower degradation, often backed by a 30-year performance warranty.

Battery technology is also constantly improving, driven by the rise of electric vehicles. When looking into solar storage, make sure you're researching the latest and most efficient models.

By staying informed and choosing the right products, you'll ensure your home solar system is built to last, providing clean energy for years to come. Carbon Central is here to help you navigate these decisions and create the perfect solar setup for your home.

Customer Mistakes

In this section, we'll highlight some of the common mistakes people make when chatting with our surveyors and sales team.

These slip-ups aren't due to a lack of interest – there's just a lot to think about when installing solar, and not everyone is a solar expert!

Identify your energy needs

We all know the basics of our energy bills, but do we really understand our energy usage? Take a closer look at how often you use your electrical appliances and check if you can switch any gas-powered ones to electric.

While gas may seem cheaper at first glance, it's often used more for heating and cooking, which can make it more expensive in the long run. By moving some of these tasks to electric power, especially with your own solar energy, you could save money over time.

We're not suggesting a complete overhaul of your home, but thinking about future upgrades or changes can help you make the most of your self-generated solar power.

Inspect your roof

Examining your roof might not be part of your daily routine, but it's important when considering solar panels. Although roofs are built to last, the added weight of solar panels can highlight existing issues.

Before installing solar panels, it's wise to check your roof for any damage. Look for cracked or loose tiles, sagging, or signs of rot. Qualified installers will check these too, and if they find issues like excessive spray foam, they might require a waiver.

If your roof needs repairs or replacement, consider an in-roof system. While more expensive than traditional installations, it's often cheaper than a full roof replacement and provides a cleaner look. If your roof isn't in great repair and may need replacing before you fit panels, it may be worth asking about in-roof systems – these are more expensive than on roof systems, but cheaper than replacing the whole roof.

Plan the future

Thinking ahead can prevent future headaches. When choosing a solar panel system, consider potential changes like switching from gas to electricity, buying an electric car, or installing a PV diverter.

Adding a few extra panels or more battery storage now is more cost-effective than retrofitting later. And don't forget to invest in bird netting with your installation — it's a small cost that protects your roof and panels from wildlife damage.

Questions Matter

Don't hesitate to ask your installer or sales advisor any questions you have — it's their job to provide answers. Since you'll be investing a significant amount, make sure you understand every detail.

There's no such thing as a silly question. In fact, asking a few questions you already know the answers to can help you gauge their expertise. At the end of this guide, we've included a list of key questions to ask, helping you ensure their system meets all your needs and their company has the right solutions for you.

Get multiple quotes

It might seem like a hassle, but getting multiple quotes is crucial when investing in a Solar Energy System. Even though it takes time to have several installers visit your home, comparing quotes ensures you're getting the best deal. If having people come to your home is inconvenient, consider booking remote consultations.

Remember, a good salesperson should not only provide a quote but also conduct a thorough survey of your home. They need to assess where the panels, inverter, and any battery storage will go to ensure your system is viable.

In addition to in-home or remote quotes, use online forms and comparison sites to get a general idea of pricing. While these won't be as accurate as a detailed survey, they can give you a ballpark figure.

Get everything in writing

No matter what promises are made or what you see advertised, always get your quote in writing. Some companies might add unnecessary extras to inflate the price, so a written quote ensures you only pay for what you agreed upon.

Make sure all guarantees, warranties, discounts, and savings are confirmed in writing—whether through an official quote, email, or a traditional letter. This protects you if any issues arise after installation and ensures you're not surprised by additional costs.

Most quotes have an expiry date, which reflects fluctuating wholesale prices and changing offers, so be sure to act before it lapses.

Equipment Mistakes

Errors in specifying the equipment you need can happen for various reasons, which is why it's essential to get everything in writing.

To ensure you're getting the best deal, there are a few steps you can take.

Consider battery storage

We can't stress this enough — *consider battery storage* for your solar system. What was once seen as a luxury is now a smart addition for many homeowners. Thanks to falling battery prices and advantageous SEG tariffs, adding a battery to your setup means you can use your solar energy throughout the evening and night. Plus, with energy suppliers offering lower rates for off-peak charging and the option to sell excess energy back during peak times, battery storage can be a cost-effective way to maximise your solar investment.

Don't fall for the hype

It's easy to get caught up in claims of "industry-leading" or "cutting-edge" solar products. While some manufacturers might have genuinely impressive technology, the field is constantly evolving. Instead of chasing the latest buzz, focus on established brands with reliable warranties and realistic performance stats.

Look for panels with efficiency ratings above 20% — a solid benchmark, though keep in mind this number may shift as technology advances.

Stick to reputable sources — not social media

Avoid getting your solar information from forums, Reddit, or YouTube. While these platforms can offer some insights, they often include unreliable or exaggerated claims. Solar technology is well-established, and you can find accurate, comprehensive information from reputable sources.

Don't rely on anecdotal experiences; make sure your decisions are based on verified data from trusted experts.

Money Mistakes

We understand the frustration of overspending. While we're all for investing in quality and getting value for your money, paying extra simply because you overlooked a detail is something nobody wants.

We believe in making sure you get the best deal without any unnecessary costs.

Don't overlook VAT and government grants

Here's a tip you don't want to miss: all domestic solar installations are VAT-free—and that now includes batteries too! The UK government removed VAT on solar systems a few years back to encourage greener homes, and as of February 2024, this tax relief extends to other components like batteries and PV diverters. That's a solid 20% saving on your solar setup. Be sure to take advantage of this discount before the rules change in 2027. And don't forget to check out the government's ECO4 scheme and local council grants, like the LAX scheme, which could provide additional support if you meet the eligibility criteria.

Manage your expectations

Solar panels are fantastic for cutting energy costs, but they won't eliminate your electricity bill entirely. While they can meet most of your energy needs during spring, summer, and autumn, you'll still rely on the grid during winter.

Additionally, if there's a power cut, your system will automatically shut down to protect engineers, so you won't be able to use your solar power until the grid is back up. Keep in mind that going completely off-grid with solar alone requires a large battery array and is not the norm for most domestic setups.

Factor in financing

Financing your solar system can make the initial investment more manageable, but remember to include your monthly payments when calculating potential savings.

Typical solar systems have a payback period of around 8-11 years. If you're using a loan or finance, add interest payments to this period. Even with financing, you'll still save money with current electricity prices, though energy costs can fluctuate.

Avoid the cheapest option

The old saying, "you get what you pay for" often holds true in the solar industry. While it's tempting to go for the cheapest quote, substantial differences in price can signal potential issues.

Reputable companies usually have similar pricing, thanks to bulk buying and efficient operations. If a quote is significantly lower, investigate further to ensure the company isn't cutting corners on certifications, audits, or product quality.

Always choose a reputable installer with a solid track record to ensure you're getting a quality system and service.

What questions should I be asking?

? Is your company MCS-accredited?

MCS (Microgeneration Certification Scheme) is the UK's leading independent regulator for solar installations. It's a sign of a company's commitment to industry standards and customer protection.

If a company isn't MCS-accredited, ask why. While some alternatives like Flexi-Orb exist, MCS is the most widely recognized by energy providers.

? Are you registered with HIES?

The Home Improvement & Energy Systems (HIES) scheme offers consumer protection, including free deposit protection, stage payment protection, and insurance-backed guarantees.

They also provide a robust dispute resolution service. If a company isn't registered with HIES, find out why, as it could be a red flag.

? How long is your workmanship guarantee?

Ensure the company provides a workmanship guarantee, ideally for at least 2 years. This covers the quality of the installation itself, so if anything goes wrong with how the panels are fitted, you're protected.

? What is the product guarantee on your panels?

Solar panels should come with a product guarantee of at least 25 years. This covers the physical components of the panels, which are designed to be durable and robust against the elements.

The product guarantee is different to the performance guarantee.

? What is the performance guarantee on your panels?

The performance guarantee tells you how long the panels will operate efficiently. Solar panels typically degrade slightly each year, so ensure the guarantee covers a period of around 22-30 years, depending on the panel's efficiency and degradation rate. That's your performance guarantee.

Are your panels Tier 1?

Tier 1 panels come from established manufacturers with a strong track record. This doesn't guarantee quality but indicates that the company producing them is likely to stay in business, ensuring your warranty remains valid.

How long is your battery guarantee?

Battery storage is key for maximising your solar energy use. Look for batteries with a warranty of at least 10 years or 6,000 cycles, which should provide a good balance of longevity and performance.

How long is your inverter guarantee?

The inverter is essential for converting solar energy into usable power. Most hybrid inverters come with a 5 to 10-year warranty. Check the warranty period and consider how it aligns with your long-term plans.

Does your aftercare include system monitoring?

System monitoring can help ensure your solar setup is working efficiently long after installation. Companies offering this service often show they're confident in their work and committed to long-term customer satisfaction.

Are savings mentioned in your quotes verified independently by EPVS?

EPVS (Energy Performance Verification Scheme) reviews and verifies the savings estimates provided by solar companies. This adds a layer of credibility to the figures quoted, so you know they're not inflated.

Is scaffolding and other works covered by your insurance?

Check if the installer's insurance covers all aspects of the installation, including scaffolding and any other necessary work. This ensures that your property is protected throughout the installation process.

Are you FCA regulated?

If the company offers financing options, make sure they are regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA). This ensures they adhere to financial regulations and provide reliable advice and options.



Choose the right solar company

Here at Carbon Central, we make sure you can be confident in every part of the process, from your first contact until the guarantee runs out on your solar panels.

You don't have to take our word for it though. We're rated Excellent on Trustpilot.

At Carbon Central, a greener future is at the heart of everything we do. We believe in creating a more sustainable world, and that starts with the homes we live in.

By harnessing the power of the sun to generate clean, renewable, free energy for your home, you're helping create a greener future.

Why us?



Guaranteed Lowest Price

Our Carbon Central "Price Promise" means we match any like-for-like quote, so you'll always get the lowest price available.



100% Sustainable Green Energy

Reduce your home's carbon footprint and save on your bills. Sell back to the grid and earn money for the electricity you generate.



Top-Rated Customer Service

Our UK-based customer service team are here to assist you through the process, and make switching to solar energy easy and worry-free.



Flexible Finance Options

Pay in a way that suits your budget, and start enjoying the benefits of solar right away.

How much could you save with solar?

Speak with with one of our in-house
experts to find out

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