



Get Started with Solar!

First Steps and Important Considerations

If you are considering investing in a solar energy system for your home or business, here are a few steps to help you get started:



- 1. Determine how much energy you currently consume.** Gather your utility bills (gas and electric) from the past 12 months to calculate your *minimum, maximum, and average usage*. If you can't find your bills, ask your local utilities to send you your usage history (most will gladly provide this information for you). You might consider starting a spreadsheet to track your usage and expenditures going forward – once you invest in energy efficiency and renewable energy, you will likely notice a significant change over time.
- 2. Invest in energy efficiency.** In conjunction with or before you invest in solar energy, you should identify ways to reduce your current energy consumption through simple and cost-effective energy efficiency measures, such as lighting, insulation, weatherization, and efficient appliances. Visit [Utah Clean Energy](#) and [Energy Star](#) for ideas and information on energy efficiency or the websites below to **learn more about efficiency incentives and programs**. If you know your home/business is already highly energy efficient, you are ready to move on to step 3.
 - [Rocky Mountain Power Do-It-Yourself Energy Audit](#)
 - [Rocky Mountain Power Energy Efficiency Programs](#)
 - [Rocky Mountain Power Energy Efficiency Resources](#)
 - [Questar Gas – Thermwise Home Energy Audit](#)
 - [Questar Gas – Thermwise Efficiency Incentives](#)
 - [Federal Tax Credits for Energy Efficiency](#)
- 3. Identify the solar technology best suited for your needs.** Do a little research to determine which solar technology and application you are most interested in:
 - solar photovoltaic (PV) for electricity (choose between fixed or adjustable roof-mount, pole-mount, and/or tracking system)
 - solar thermal (also called solar hot water) for water heating and/or space heating
 - solar PVT system (photovoltaic and thermal combined)
 - passive solar design (for new construction or renovations)
 - [See Solar Basics](#) to learn more about each technology

Content provided by Solar Salt Lake Partner

www.utahcleanenergy.org



We Partner to Build the New Clean Energy Economy

Last updated 10/25/10



- 4. Identify your solar potential and estimated system cost.** There are many ways to determine your solar resource potential. You can use the solar website mapping tool and enter your address, you can consult with a [qualified installer](#), and/or you can use available on-line [solar calculators](#). Your solar potential will be determined by your roof and lot configuration, available roof space, and surrounding shade (buildings or vegetation). Your system cost will be determined by the system size, available incentives, technology, and the system configuration. For more information on these questions, see the [Frequently Asked Questions Section](#).
- 5. Contact Local Installers.** As with any project or investment, it is good to get a few quotes before choosing an installer. See [Solar Installers](#) and [Frequently Asked Questions](#) for guidance on this process.
- 6. Research codes, access, and possible restrictions.** Before finalizing your investment, you'll want to ensure your proposed installation complies with local codes, ordinances, HOAs, and/or historic district requirements. You'll also want to check with your local utility about [net metering](#) (connecting to the grid). You and your installer may need to work through modifications to any of the aforementioned before the system can be permitted and installed. You should also check with your local government to see if there are any discounts or waivers for solar installations.
- 7. Apply for all available incentives and net metering.** Work with your installer to apply for all available incentives (See [Solar Incentives](#)) and net metering (See [Local Codes and Net Metering](#)). It is best to start this process as early as possible to avoid delays or changes to incentive offerings. See the [Frequently Asked Questions](#) for guidance on this process.
- 8. Inquire about payment and financing options.** Ask your installer if he/she offers any sort of same-as-cash or other financing options to help you pay for your system over time. You should also contact your financial institution to determine if your solar investment is eligible for financing or payment options, or a home equity loan. Lastly, inquire with your local government to determine if they have any loan programs available for solar. Salt Lake County residents may be eligible for a low-interest loan for their solar system through the new [Energy Smart Loan Program](#). Contact [Salt Lake County](#) for details on this program.

Content provided by Solar Salt Lake Partner

Last updated 10/25/10

www.utahcleanenergy.org



We Partner to Build the New Clean Energy Economy