

Energy Saver

# A guide to using your solar system

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## **Congratulations – you now have solar.**

This guide has useful information about how you can use your solar system and how it can help reduce your electricity bills.

Your installer will also give you information about your solar system.

This guide includes:

- Top tips
- Getting ready to use your solar system
- Getting the best out of your solar system
- Saving energy around the home
- What to do if you have a problem.

# Top tips

## Why solar?



Save money



Great for the planet

## Talk to your energy retailer



Get a smart meter installed



Confirm that you have an electricity tariff that suits your needs

## The best time to use solar

10am

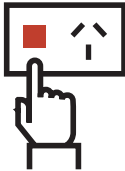


3pm



Electricity produced from the solar system is not unlimited. Do not turn all appliances on at once.

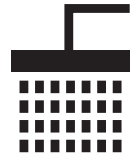
## Cut down on your electricity use



Switch off appliances at the wall when you are not using them.



Close doors, windows and curtains to stop the warm or cool air escaping.



Have shorter showers.

**More at:** [energysaver.nsw.gov.au/households/fine-tune-your-home](http://energysaver.nsw.gov.au/households/fine-tune-your-home)

## What to do if you have a problem



Speak to your property manager or landlord if you have any issues with your solar system. They will contact the solar installer to help fix any problems.

# Getting ready to use your solar system

Follow these steps after your solar system has been installed.

## Step 1. Get a smart meter

### What is a smart meter?

A smart meter is a device with a digital two-way communication system that measures when you use electricity and how much.

### What does it do?

It records your energy use every 30-minutes and sends the information to your electricity retailer daily. Your electricity retailer can read your meter remotely.

With a smart meter, you can get a plan which has different electricity prices for different times of the day. For example, you can save money if you use less energy in peak periods.

With solar, you can make money by sending unused electricity back to the grid.



## How do you get a smart meter?

Tell your electricity retailer you have a solar system. They will arrange for a smart meter to be installed. Things you should ask:

- who will install the meter
- when they will come to install the meter
- what are the costs or changes to your electricity contract.

## Things you should know:

- that the meter must be installed within 15 business days or a date you agree to
- that the installer will need to temporarily turn off your electricity
- that your solar installer can help you with organising your smart meter to be installed and answer any questions. They may be able to put the meter request in for you.

## Who do you contact if you have issues with your smart meter?

First contact your electricity retailer. If you cannot resolve your issues with them, contact the Energy and Water Ombudsman NSW (EWON). [www.ewon.com.au](http://www.ewon.com.au) or **1800 246 545**. They provide free support to resolve problems with your electricity retailer.



## **Step 2. Get the best electricity deal**

Now that you have solar, it is important you understand what will happen to your electricity rates/tariff and bill.

Here are some questions that you can ask your electricity retailer to get the best deal:

1. What new deals and rates for solar do you have?
2. What are the advantages and disadvantages of any new offers for me?
3. What solar feed-in tariffs are available?
4. Will I receive credits on my electricity bill if I do not use all the solar energy produced by the panels?
5. How will solar affect my current electricity rates? Will I be charged a higher rate when I connect to solar?
6. What are the billing/payment periods?
7. Are there any fees or penalties for closing my account if I choose another retailer?

## What is a 'feed-in tariff'?

A solar feed-in tariff is the money you get for the unused electricity produced by your solar system, which goes back into the grid.

It is paid as cents per unit (kilowatt hour, kWh) of electricity sent back to the grid and will show as a credit on your bill. The amount per unit paid varies between retailers.

## Shop around

Once your current electricity retailer has confirmed your new rates, we recommend you shop around for:

- the best deals and compare prices
- 'solar-friendly' electricity retailers who have a competitive feed-in tariff.

A good place to compare offers is the government-run website Energy Switch. Go to [energyswitch.service.nsw.gov.au](http://energyswitch.service.nsw.gov.au).

If you sign a deal and then change your mind, you can cancel within ten business days.



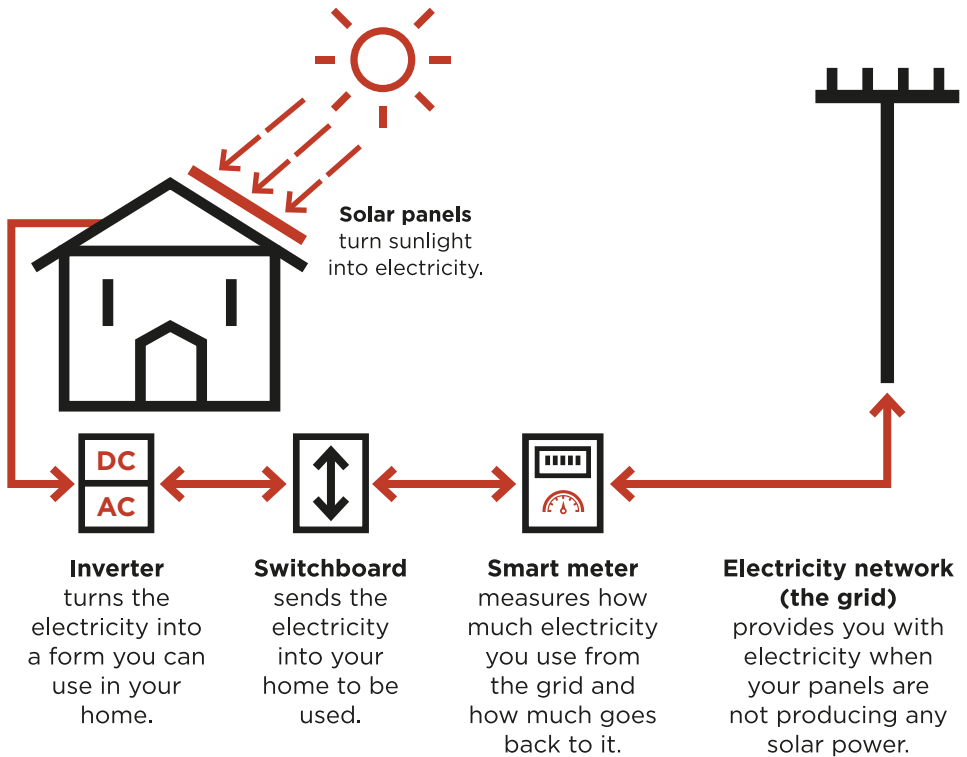
# Getting the best out of your solar system

## How does your solar system work?

Your solar panels turn energy from the sun into free electricity. This is called solar power.

Solar systems produce more energy on sunny days compared to cloudy days. Using free solar power during the day reduces the amount of electricity you will need to buy from your electricity retailer.

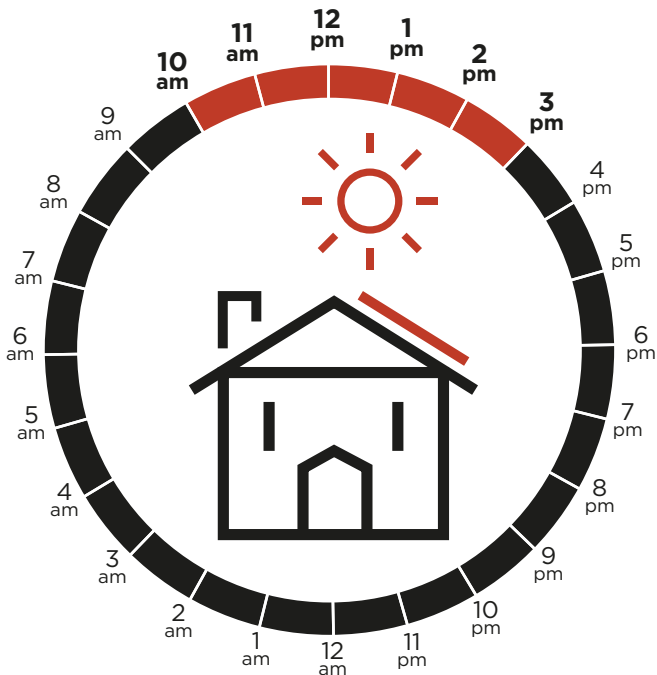
Outside of daylight hours, your panels are not producing power, so your electricity will come from the grid. You will be charged for this as normal by your electricity retailer.





## When is the best time to use solar?

Use your solar during the sunniest parts of the day. This is usually between 10am and 3pm.



Make the most of the free solar power by using large appliances during these times. For example, running your washing machine during the day will reduce the amount of energy you need to buy at night. This will help reduce your electricity bills.

If you are not at home during the day, use the delay start feature – if possible – on your appliances.

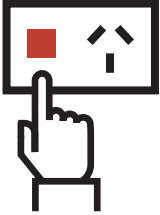
Your solar system will produce less electricity on cloudy and rainy days. Avoid using energy-heavy appliances when you have this type of weather.

Remember the electricity produced from your solar system is not unlimited. Do not turn all appliances on at once. You may end up needing electricity from the grid, which will affect your bill.

To find out more about how the solar system works watch this video – [www.energysaver.nsw.gov.au/help-me-use-solar](http://www.energysaver.nsw.gov.au/help-me-use-solar).

# Saving energy around the home

## Anytime



Switch off unused appliances at the wall when you are not using them.



Check the Energy Rating label when you buy a new appliance. The more stars, the cheaper to run.

## In the bathroom & laundry



Wash clothes in cold water.



Report leaking taps.

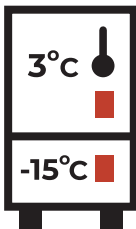


Have short showers.



Hang clothes to dry.

## In the kitchen



Set your fridge between 3°C and 4°C. Set your freezer between -15°C and -18°C.

Clean door seals and replace if worn.



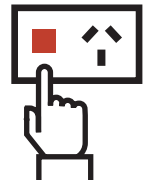
Use lids on pots to speed up cooking.

## In the living areas



Turn off lights when you leave a room.

Switch off TVs and home entertainment systems at the wall. Don't leave them on 'stand-by'.

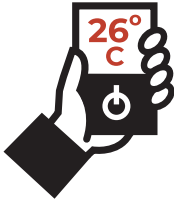


## In summer

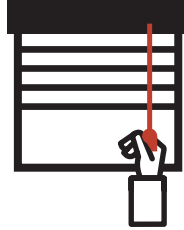


Use your fan first.

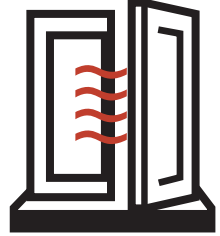
Set air conditioning between 23°C and 26°C.



Close doors, windows, curtains and blinds during the day.

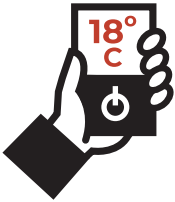


Open windows at night to let the cool breeze in.

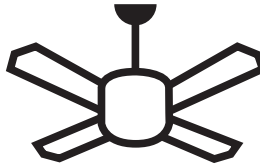


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## In winter

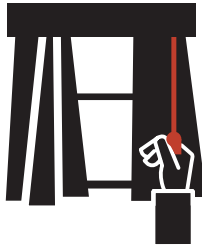


Set heating between 18°C and 21°C.

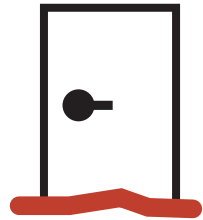


Use a ceiling fan to move warm air around your home.

Close doors, windows, blinds and curtains at night to keep the heat inside your home.



Use door snakes to stop draughts.



For more information about how to save energy and to see if you are eligible for any offers to households that help reduce your energy bills visit [www.energysaver.nsw.gov.au](http://www.energysaver.nsw.gov.au)

# What to do if you have a problem

## How do you know if your solar system is working properly?

### ✓ Check the inverter and the smart meter

The inverter provides data to help you understand how much electricity your solar system is producing. Your solar installer will show you where your inverter is and how to read it. Your smart meter shows how this electricity is being used in your home. The more electricity you use from your solar system between 10am and 3pm, the lower your electricity bills are.

### ✓ Check your electricity bills

When you get your next electricity bill, compare it with the bill from the previous year in the same period. This way, you can see if your electricity bill has gone down.

## What to do if your solar system stops working

If your solar system stops working, let your property manager or landlord know as soon as possible. They will contact the solar installer to fix the problem. Never try to fix the issue yourself as it could be a risk to your safety.

## What to do if you have problems with your electricity retailer

If you have a complaint about your electricity retailer and they are not being helpful, you can contact the Energy and Water Ombudsman NSW for support at [www.ewon.com.au](http://www.ewon.com.au). They provide free support to resolve problems with your electricity retailer.