



Before the visit:

- Check local planning regulations to make sure you are allowed to install a PV system.
- Check that the solar PV company is MCS* certified and a member of the REAL* Consumer Code.
- Don't accept a price over the phone, whether a non-binding estimate or a firm quote.
- Before your appointment, find your energy bills from the last year so you and the solar company representative have a good understanding of your energy use and costs.
- Check whether a salesperson or an experienced surveyor will be visiting you. Unlike a surveyor, a salesperson cannot carry out a technical survey and so can only estimate the cost of installation - an accurate quote can only be provided once the survey has been completed.

* Microgeneration Certificate Scheme

* Renewable Energy Assurance Limited

Regardless of whether a salesperson or surveyor visits, only make your buying decision after a technical site survey.

To ensure you're getting value for money, we also recommend getting detailed estimates from three different companies before making your final decision and why not ask for feedback from previous customers.

During the visit:

As soon as the company representative arrives check whether they are a salesperson or a surveyor - a salesperson needs to explain:

- The limitations of their visit.
- That your house will need to be assessed by an experienced surveyor following their visit.
- That they cannot provide a quote on the day and that their estimate could change following a technical survey.
- Whether they receive commission from sales.
- That you should not sign a contract on the basis of their visit alone.

If you are visited by a surveyor, these are the things that a good surveyor should do:

- Check the orientation of the roof.
- Measure the tilt angle of the roof.
- Make a thorough assessment of roof quality - from both inside via the loft and outside
- When calculating a quote, they should record any possible risk of shade on the roof from trees, neighbouring houses and chimneys, and also take into account how this will change throughout the day and as seasons change.
- Look in detail at your fuse box and metering.
- Ask you how much electricity you use and when in the day you use it.
- Look around your house and discuss where to locate cables and equipment.



After the visit:

- The company should provide you with an in-depth quote including panel/module information, details of warranties, details of the solar inverter, the company's terms and conditions, and information on how it has calculated the payback, rate of return and savings.
- Ask for a breakdown of your quote and check that it includes VAT at 5% and full costs of installation such as scaffolding.
- Check how the quote has been calculated. Did they just use SAP (the Government-recommended method) or their own method to estimate performance too? Check the quote is tailored to your property and your energy usage rather than just being based on a standard or average property.
- Discuss the output of the solar PV system being offered and make sure it comes with a guarantee. You want to be sure that you are getting good value for money, which means ensuring that the system you buy is as efficient as possible.
- Check the maintenance requirements of your solar PV system. This may be something that is included in your package or you may have to pay for maintenance separately.

Finally, the company should not do anything to pressure you into buying the system that day - so they're not supposed to offer large on-the-spot discounts or use other pressure-selling techniques. Not only is this breaking the rules, but they are depriving you of the chance to compare quotes and take time to think about their offer.

Report any firms you think are breaking the rules to the REAL Assurance Scheme

020 7981 0850

For more information on buying and installing solar PV visit **www.which.co.uk/solar** or call The Energy Saving Trust's free phone

0800 512 012

To find a certified installer and products search the MCS database at: **www.microgenerationcertification.org** and to find out more about the REAL Consumer Code visit: **www.realassurance.org.uk**

Find recommended installers on: **www.local.which.co.uk**