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Are Homemade Solar Panels Possible, Economical, and Useful?

With energy prices rising steadily over the last few decades and no reason to think they’ll fall anytime soon, many homeowners are exploring the option of powering their homes with renewable, or "green", power systems. The two most common home green energy systems are wind turbines and solar panels. Of these two, solar energy panels have emerged as the most popular, due to their solid-state nature - meaning that with fewer moving parts, they require less maintenance over the years.

Unfortunately, installing a solar power system in your home can be prohibitively expensive. Having pre-made solar power panels professionally installed costs at least $3000 - and the price tag only rises quickly from there. To reduce this huge cost, many homeowners are exploring the possibility of building and installing their own homemade solar panels. You may be one of them.

If so, you probably have a lot of questions. Can the average person really build a Do-It-Yourself (DIY) solar power system in their garage or basement? If they could, would it really be significantly cheaper than having it professionally installed? And finally, would homemade solar panels provide enough electricity to be worth all the time and effort? This article will seek to answer these questions.

What Are the Benefits of a Home Solar Power System?

- You can reduce or even eliminate your power bill.
- If you generate surplus electricity, you can sell it to your local power company.
- You can increase the property value of your home.
- You can get tax deductions for using eco-friendly home power systems.
- You no longer have to worry about power outages.
- You help protect the environment - solar energy produces no greenhouse gasses.

What Are the Benefits of Building Homemade Solar Panels?

- Money. Over half of a contractor's installation fee is time and labor. If you provide this yourself, you can drastically reduce the cost of building and installing your own home solar power system.
- Time. You can build your homemade solar panels in stages, adding new panels and producing more electricity at your own pace.
- Education. By building a home solar power system yourself, you'll learn how solar electrical technology works. You'll be able to perform your own maintenance and repairs, further reducing
Where Can I Find the Materials to Build a Homemade Solar Panel?

Almost all the materials you'll need to build a DIY solar panel (such as copper wire, plywood, glass, silicone, etc.) can be found at either your local hardware store (such as Home Depot) or electronics store (such as Radio Shack). The same goes for the tools and equipment you'll need to build your homemade solar panels. Any tool you don't already have in your garage or basement (such as a voltage meter), you can buy at your local hardware or electronics store.

The lone exception to this rule is the photovoltaic solar cells that you'll need to build together into DIY solar power panels. Unless you live in a very large city with a specialized solar hardware store, you'll probably need to order these online or you can make it on your own.

Where Should I Place My Homemade Solar Panels?

The two most common places to put DIY solar panels are either on the roof of your house, or on the ground in your yard.

The roof has emerged as the most popular location for two reasons. First, in order to convert sunlight into electricity, solar energy panels need a direct line-of-sight between them and the sun. Trees, other buildings, or any other obstacle that provides shade or otherwise gets in the way will block the sun from your homemade solar panels. The easiest way to solve this problem is to raise the solar power panels up higher than the obstacles. To do that, of course, you should place the DIY solar panels on the roof.

Second, solar energy panels are big, and take up a lot of space. Furthermore, you will probably need more than one to power your entire home. If you mount your homemade solar panels on the ground, you may quickly fill your entire yard. Mounting DIY solar panels in the roof instead has the advantage of keeping them out of the way and freeing up your yard.

Ground-mounted solar power panels, however, do have one big advantage: accessibility. It is much easier and safer to walk out into your yard than on the roof of your house to perform maintenance and repairs to your homemade solar panels. If you live in a part of the country where there are few trees, such as the Great Plains or the Southwest, and if you own enough property (like a farm) to mount several DIY solar panels and have room to spare, perhaps ground-mounted solar energy panels are the way to go.

What Direction Should I Point My Homemade Solar Panels?

Placing your DIY solar panels perfectly flat, facing straight up, is the best option. This way, no matter where the sun is in the sky or at what angle, sunlight is still hitting the solar panel somewhere. Unfortunately, however, many homes have angled roofs instead of flat, making the "pointing straight up" option impractical. In this case, mount your DIY solar panels on the south-facing side of your roof to collect the most sunlight. In the continental United States, the sun is in the southern part of the sky for the most part.

How Can I Build Homemade Solar Panels?
The answer to that question goes way beyond the scope of this brief article. What we can do, however, is point you in the right direction. The easiest and most efficient route for you to go is to buy a step-by-step instruction manual on how to build DIY solar panels from one of the many websites that sell them. These are usually $50 or less, and well worth the money.

Not all instruction manuals for DIY solar power panels are equal, however. Here are some things to look for when shopping online for a good instruction manual:

- Clear, Step-by-Step Instructions (instead of just overviews)
- Simple, Plain English (instead of confusing technical terms and slang)
- Multiple, Clear Illustrations (instead of just text)
- Demonstration Videos (although not necessary, they are very, very helpful)
- Shopping Tips (for solar cells, deep-cycles batteries, and other hard-to-find items)
- Good Reviews (from past customers)
- Price (more than $60 is too much)

If you can find a high-quality manual, you will start enjoying the benefits of DIY solar panels within 2 weeks, because the manual should be able to teach you to build homemade solar energy panels in just a weekend.

If you’ve enjoyed all the exciting information you read here about Homemade Solar Panels, you’ll love everything else you find at DIY Solar Panels.

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