

# Plug in: to using solar power



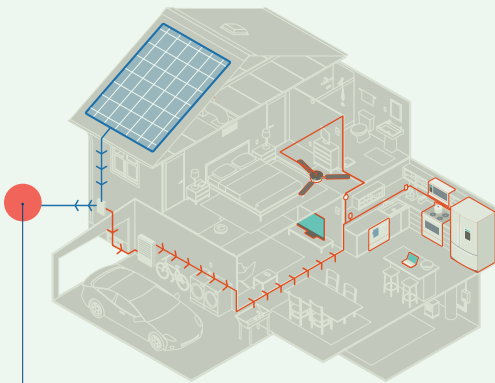
Now that your solar power system is up and running, you're getting energy from the sun and helping your wallet and the planet. This step-by-step guide outlines how to make the most of it, what your rights and responsibilities are, and what to do if something goes wrong.

## 1

### Step 1: Using your solar power system.

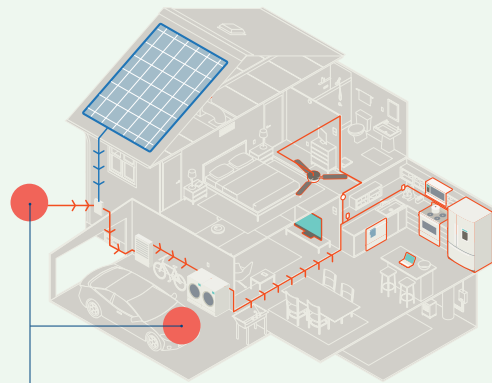
#### How do I use my solar system?

You don't have to do anything special to use your solar power system. During the day, it converts sunlight into electricity and feeds it into your house. Your home, including appliances like your fridge, computer, and other electric appliances use this electricity first. Your home will only draw energy from the grid if you are using more energy than your solar is producing.



The solar panels are powering all appliances.

Extra electricity your panels produce may be exported and sold to the grid.



The dryer needs extra electricity to run at the same time as everything else. This extra energy is drawn from the grid.



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# 1

## How do I make the most of my solar?

You're always better off using your solar to power your appliances than using the grid. Try to use major appliances (such as your washing machine, air conditioner, dishwasher) during the day if you can so they are using your solar electricity.

If you're using a few major appliances at the same time, you might need extra energy from the grid as well as your solar. To rely more on your solar power and not the grid, try to use your major appliances one at a time.



## **Don't worry:**

There will be times when you need to use a few major appliances at the same time and therefore buy some extra electricity from your retailer. It's ok: you're saving enough by using your solar power to make up for it.

## What are solar exports?

Solar exports, or solar feed-in, is any solar power your system generates that is more than you need to use at the time. This extra amount may be sent to the electricity grid and used by your neighbours. The amount is measured by your meter and your electricity retailer may pay you for it.

The amount you are paid is called the feed-in tariff and it varies depending on your electricity retailer. It might also vary at different times of day – for example, it might be higher in the late afternoon when more electricity is being used by your neighbours. When you get your electricity bill, the amount your retailer owes you (your feed-in tariff) will be deducted from the amount you have to pay them for the electricity you used from the grid.

The amount you can feed-in might be limited by the ability of the electricity grid in your area to take it. In some places, no feed-in is allowed. But don't worry – you still save a lot by using your solar power yourself.



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## 1

### How can I tell that my solar system is working?

Your solar inverter may have an information screen that shows how much it is currently generating and how much in total it's generated for the last day, week, month. Your electricity bill will show how much you've exported to the grid.

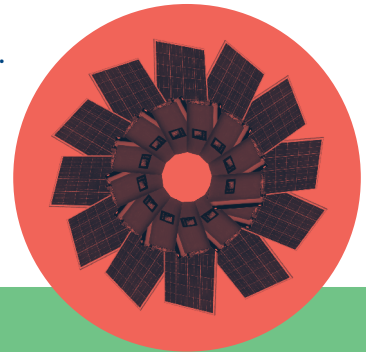
If your solar power system has a monitoring app, it will also show you how much it's generated, how much you have used, and how much you've exported.

A good solar installer will have shown you how to read the inverter display and how to use the app.

## Matching a solar power system with an energy retail plan

Once your solar power system is up and running, you will generally be buying less electricity from your retailer than you used to. This is a good time to check out whether a different energy retail plan will suit you better.

The Australian Government's [Energy Made Easy](#) website will let you compare available energy plans and make the best choice for your circumstances.



## 2

### Step 2: Solar rights and responsibilities

Australian Consumer Law gives you rights and protections when buying products. These are called [consumer guarantees](#) and apply regardless of the product warranties that come with your solar power system components.

One of the consumer guarantees is that a product is 'fit for purpose'. If you have any specific requirements for your solar power system (for example, that it produces enough electricity to supply your usual daytime usage) you should tell the solar provider this when asking for a quote so they can tell you whether it is possible and, if it is, design the system to provide it.

The expected performance of the system and your typical energy usage should be noted in the quote or contract.



Want to know more about how to purchase and install new energy tech? This is one of ten factsheets that can help you.

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## 2

### Consumer guarantees

#### Products must:

- Be installed compliantly by a suitably licensed (and accredited) person.
- Be of acceptable quality, that is: safe, lasting, with no faults.
- Look acceptable.
- Do all the things someone would normally expect them to do.
- Match descriptions made by the salesperson, the retailer, on packaging and labels, and in promotions or advertising.
- Be fit for the purpose the business told you it would be fit for and for any purpose that you made known to the business before purchasing.
- Not carry any hidden debts or extra charges.
- Meet any extra promises made about performance, condition and quality, such as life time guarantees and money back offers.
- Have spare parts and repair facilities available for a reasonable time after purchase unless you were told otherwise.

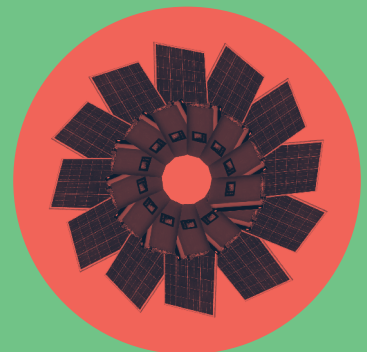
#### Services must:

- Be provided with acceptable care and skill or technical knowledge and taking all necessary steps to avoid loss and damage.
- Be fit for the purpose or give the results that you and the business had agreed to.
- Be delivered within a reasonable time when there is no agreed end date.

### Your responsibilities

You are required to get approval from your local electricity network to install and connect solar to their grid, and it needs to meet certain standards that they require. Your solar installer takes care of this for you, they will tell you if there's anything you need to do as part of this process.

If your installer or electricity network has other requirements of you, they will let you know.



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## 3

### Step 3: If something goes wrong

#### What do I do if there's a problem?

Sometimes solar power systems don't perform as expected or can completely malfunction. This could be due to faulty components or installation errors.

Good solar installers want happy customers and will do their best to sort out problems as quickly as possible. Providers and installers who are members of a best practice scheme such as the Approved Solar Retailer scheme are required to have good processes for dealing with faults, problems, and complaints.

There are legal protections for customers if manufacturers or installers don't do the right thing.

If your solar power system seems to have a problem, first contact your installer. A good one will promptly respond to you, figure out the problem and fix or replace it.

If your installer won't help, your state or territory consumer protection agency will give you advice and maybe assistance. Use [this list](#) to find yours.



#### What if my installer isn't around anymore?

If an installation problem becomes apparent within the installation warranty period and your installer is no longer in business, you may be stuck. Contact your state or territory consumer protection agency for advice.

If the problem is a fault in a component like a panel or inverter, you may be in luck. Product manufacturers must honour warranties even if the retailer or installer of the product is no longer in business. Find your product information – which will identify the specific model and have contact details for the manufacturer – and contact them. If they won't help, contact your state or territory consumer protection agency for advice.

Resilient South is a partnership of



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