

Solar Panel Installer

Rooftops, racking and wiring. The fastest trade on this site to get into, and the one most tied to policy.

TYPICAL PAY

\$53,140

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$42k to \$80k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

up to 1 year

after high school

DEMAND

Good

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

No

anyone can do it

WHERE YOU WORK

**House roofs, commercial roofs,
ground-mounted solar farms, war...**

How you get there

- 1 High school diploma or equivalent** Grade 12
A diploma or a GED (high school equivalency credential) is enough for most companies. Basic math and comfort with tools matter more than grades.
- 2 Get on a crew** Weeks
Residential installers hire year round in sunny states. You start carrying panels and learning racking before you touch wiring.
- 3 Learn the system** A few months to a year
Racking, mounting, flashing a roof so it does not leak, running conduit, connecting inverters, and the safety rules for working at height.
- 4 Certify** Year 1 to year 3
The associate-level photovoltaic credential is the normal first step, then the installation professional certification once you have documented experience.
- 5 Lead, or go electrical** 2 to 6 years
Run a crew, move to commercial and utility projects, or start an electrical apprenticeship and come back with a license.

Pros and cons

- + Fastest route on this site from high school to a full wage
- + No tuition, no license exam and no debt to start
- + Physical outdoor work with a visible result every day
- Roof work in summer heat, with real fall risk
- Lower pay ceiling than the licensed trades
- Demand swings with tax credits and state policy, so layoffs happen in waves

Optional boosts

Photovoltaic associate. Photovoltaic installation professional. Battery storage. Electrical license.

Good to know

Panels lose more to shade than to clouds

A single chimney shadow across the wrong part of an array can cut output far more than the panel area it covers, because the panels are wired in strings. Working out where the shade falls through the year i...

Every mount is a hole in a roof

Most callbacks on residential solar are leaks, not electrical faults. The flashing that seals each mounting point is the part homeowners never see and the part that decides whether the job was done properly.

Where these numbers come from

My Next Move: Solar Photovoltaic Installers (47-2231.00)
North American Board of Certified Energy Practitioners: certifications
North American Board of Certified Energy Practitioners: fees
Interstate Renewable Energy Council: clean energy training and licensing

Numbers checked September 2026. Pay figures are typical full-time annual amounts in United States dollars, based on Bureau of Labor Statistics wage data and published pay scales. They vary by state, employer and experience. Tuition is for in-state students at public schools unless the card says otherwise. Sources, links and the click-through version: <https://career.help/us/careers/solar-installer>



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