

Solar Open House Toolkit

NATIONAL
SOLAR TOUR

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A Solar Open House is an informal meet and greet at a solar homeowner's home. It is an opportunity for homeowners who are considering going solar to see solar energy at work, ask questions about the process of going solar, and interact with homeowners who are interested in solar from their community.

These events are a great opportunity for solar homeowners to share their experiences and help homeowners who are considering going solar gain a greater level of comfort with the process, hopefully encouraging them to go solar themselves!

This step-by-step guide will help you plan and implement a successful solar open house!



Planning & Logistics

- 1. Choose a Date and Time** – Saturday October 5 and Sunday October 6 are the official dates for the 2019 National Solar Tour. We typically find that a time slot of between 2 – 4 hours, any time from late morning to late afternoon is most effective. However you're welcome to choose any time frame you'd like for your event!
- 2. Once you've selected your date and time, sign up to host at:** www.nationalsolartour.org/host
While you're signing up, make sure to **upload a photo** of your solar array, house/business, or even better – you and your family or staff with your solar array in the background to the sign up form so we can include it on your custom solar open house RSVP webpage!
- 3. National Map, RSVP Webpage, Flyer** – once you sign up to host a solar open house as part of the National Solar Tour, we'll add your solar open house to our National Map (nationalsolartour.org/map). We will also create a custom RSVP webpage for your solar open house, listing the event details you provided on the sign up form, the description of your solar open house, and the photo you uploaded. You will receive an email with login information you can use to edit and add to your RSVP page online on our wordpress web platform. You'll also be able to see the names of anyone who RSVPs for your event through this login and will be able to use the URL link to your custom solar open house RSVP webpage to spread the word about your event!

Solar Open House Toolkit

4. Begin Promoting

- Help spread the word about your open house in the months and weeks leading up to it by:
 - emailing friends, colleagues, and neighbors
 - contacting your neighborhood association and asking them to help spread the word
 - posting on Facebook, local community calendars and listservs, and Nextdoor
 - reaching out to your local newspaper or media sources to get them to post about your event or run an article featuring it as the date gets closer.

Event Preparation

5. Receive your Solar Open House Resource Package in the Mail in August

- In August, you will receive a package in the mail of handouts to promote and have out at your event.
- In this package, you will also receive a **solar open house yard sign** to put out in your yard or by your street during the weeks leading up to your event to make neighbors and others passing by aware.
- The printed resources you receive will include: printed copies of your **solar open house flyer** (we will also send you a digital copy of this via email within a few weeks of signing up to host), **visuals to display** at your event of different solar installations and how solar works, **sign in sheets** to collect contact information from folks who attend your solar open house, and more!

6. Consider your Event's Flow

- NOTE: **Your entire solar open house can take place outside!** There is no obligation to invite visitors inside of your solar home or business.
- Identify an area at the front of your solar home or business where you'll greet guests and have them sign in.
- Identify the best gathering space to accommodate several people.
 - If you expect good weather, outside in your yard, on your porch, or in your garage with the door open are good options
 - If outside – consider seating and shade (trees or a pop-up tent can be helpful)
 - If you expect bad weather, you may want to consider opening your home and letting folks gather in your living room, kitchen, or dining room
- Identify the best path through or around your solar home or business to give guests a little tour of:
 - Your inverter and electric box**
 - Your solar panels** (ideally from a place where they are visible from the ground – if your panels aren't easily visible, consider printing a photo you have of your solar array, using a drone to take a photo of your panels from above, or asking your solar installation company if they took a photo of your solar array while installing it that they could send to you)
 - Your computer** (show folks the website that tracks your solar system's production – additionally or if you don't have a way to show your solar system monitoring website, printed graphs or visuals of your solar production and energy savings work great, as well as copies of your electric bill before and after solar, a copy of your solar contract, etc.)
- Consider purchasing or making some light snacks and beverages to have out for folks who attend your solar open house



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Final Preparation Before your Event

7. Review Solar 101 Information

- You are not expected to be a solar expert, but familiarizing yourself with solar basics will be helpful when answering specific questions that guests may ask. We suggest reviewing this [Go Solar Guide](#) and these [Solar FAQs](#). If you get questions you can't answer, don't worry! You can always ask guests to email solartour@solarunitedneighbors.org and our experts will be happy to answer their questions.

8. Read through the rest of this toolkit and practice

- Practice your 2-3-minute talk about your experience going solar
- Practice giving your tour of your solar home/business

9. Identify a friend or family member to help out at your solar open house

- Having someone to help greet people and sign them in as they arrive at your solar open house can be a HUGE help! This will allow you to focus on talking with attendees about solar, answering questions, showing them the handouts and solar resources available to them, and touring them around your solar home. They can also take photos during the event of you interacting with folks about solar! If you'd like us to help you find a volunteer to help at your event, please email us!



Day of Event

10. Set up – one hour before

- Have a phone or camera ready, so you (or ideally your friend or family member) can take photos throughout your solar open house
 - i. photos of you showing your solar system to attendees, attendees talking and mingling, and even posed shots of groups of attendees in front of your solar panels are all great!
- Put out some directional signs at major turns on the roads around your home/business (if needed)
- Set up a small table with pens in front of your home or in the gathering area where people will sign in on the paper sign in sheets you've received as they arrive
 - i. Identify who will be stationed at the sign in table greeting guests throughout your solar open house (ideally a friend or family member so you can focus on talking about your solar)
 - ii. **It is critical that every person who attends your open house signs in with their name, email address, and zip code. This will allow us to follow up with them about solar and have an accurate of a count of the National Solar Tour's total attendance across the country!**
- Arrange seating, food/beverages, sign in sheets, printed resources and materials in your primary gathering space
- Set up a laptop in the main gathering space and open the webpage you use to track your solar panels' energy production.

Solar Open House Toolkit

11. During your event

- Make sure someone is always at the table with the event sign in sheet, ensuring that everyone who attends your solar open house signs in and provides their contact information
- Greet and mingle with guests as they arrive. Ask questions such as:
 - i. How did you hear about this solar open house?
 - ii. What interests you about going solar?
 - iii. Where are you at in the process of going solar?
 - iv. Will you be visiting any other open houses on the National Solar Tour this weekend?

- When you have a critical mass of people, address the group.

NOTE: “Critical mass” may only be a few people. It’s best to make sure folks don’t wait too long for the tour to start.

- i. Introduce yourself
- ii. Let people know that you’re glad they came and are interested in solar
- iii. Talk to the group for 2-3 minutes about:
 - When you went solar
 - Why you chose to go solar
 - What the process was like



- iv. Tell guests that you’d like to take them on a tour of your solar system

- Begin your short tour – making sure that the someone (ideally a friend or family member) stays in the sign in area to greet other incoming guests.
- On your tour, be sure to show:
 - a. **Your solar panels** – explain the number of panels, number of kilowatts your system produces, how long it took to install
 - b. **Your inverter** – explain what the inverter does and show where you can see that the panels are currently producing electricity
 - c. **Your computer or printed visuals** – show guests the website that allows you to track your solar panel production (if you don’t have a web portal like this, any printed graphs or visuals of your solar system’s production & energy savings, solar proposal or contract, and copies of your electric bills before and after going solar are great)



Solar Open House Toolkit

- v. When your tour is complete, bring guests back to the main gathering space.
 - Show guests the printed materials and solar resources we've sent you
 - Let guests know that you and the other solar homeowner(s) are happy to try to answer any questions they may have about going solar
 - a. *If you ever get asked a question you aren't sure how to answer, encourage the guest to email their question to solartour@solarunitedneighbors.org*
- vi. Repeat the tour as many times as needed and continue chatting with attendees!

After your Event

12. Celebrate!

- Thank you for sharing your solar story, helping spread the word about solar, and adding your personal touch for homeowners in your area who are considering going solar! Your commitment to solar energy and desire to share solar with your community is truly admirable. And don't forget, by participating in the National Solar Tour, your efforts are part of a nation-wide effort, amplifying your impact and the impacts of other solar homeowners like you in a huge way.

13. Enter your event sign-in sheets and send your photos to us

- Email any photos taken during your event to solartour@solarunitedneighbors.org
- Enter the names from your sign in sheets into our online form: www.nationalsolartour.org/attendance. If you don't have time to enter the names yourself, you can scan or take photos of the sign in sheets and email them to: solartour@solarunitedneighbors.org

We will reach out to all of your solar open house attendees, thanking them for attending a solar open house as part of the 2019 National Solar Tour and letting them know about more opportunities to learn about solar, go solar, and get involved with spreading solar in their community.



Thank you for hosting a solar open house and sharing your solar story!

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