

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 6 and Sunday October 7 are the official dates for the 2018 National Solar Tour. We typically find that any time between late morning and late afternoon for 2 - 4 hours typically works best. Once you've selected your date and time, **sign up to host at:** www.nationalsolartour.org

After signing up, please email a photo of your solar array, house, or even better – you and your family with your solar array in the background – to solartour@solarunitedneighbors.org.

2. **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/tour-locations). We will also create an individual RSVP webpage for your solar open house, listing the event details you provided on the sign up form, as well as a digital flyer for you to use to promote your event. Photos we receive of your solar array or house will be included on your RSVP webpage!

Once all of this is complete, we will send you an email from solartour@solarunitedneighbors.org with your RSVP link and flyer attached, typically within 2 weeks of signing up.

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3. 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

Event Preparation

4. Receive your Resource Package in the Mail

- Within 4 weeks of signing up to host a solar open house, we will mail you a package of resources to promote and have out at your solar open house.
- The printed resources you receive will include: printed copies of your solar open house flyer, handouts to display at your event about how solar works, sign in sheets to collect contact information from folks who attend your solar open house, a Go Solar Guide, and more!

5. Consider your Event's Flow

- Identify an area at the front of your home where you'll greet guests and have them sign in
- Identify the best gathering space at your home to accommodate several people
 - i. 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)
 - ii. If you expect bad weather, consider opening your home and letting folks gather in your living room, kitchen, or dining room
- Identify the best path through or around your home to give guests a little tour of:
 - i. **Your inverter and electric box**
 - ii. **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 installer if they took a photo of your solar array while installing it)
 - iii. **Your computer** (show folks the website that tracks your solar system's production – if you don't have this, 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)



- NOTE:** If you need help identifying the different components of your solar system, send pictures of your system to solartour@solarunitedneighbors.org and we'll label them for you!
- 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

6. Review Solar 101 Go Solar Guide

- You are not expected to be a solar expert, but familiarizing yourself with the Go Solar Guide will be helpful when answering specific questions that guests may ask you. If you get questions you can't answer, don't worry! You can always encourage them to reach out to solartour@solarunitedneighbors.org and our experts will be happy to answer their questions.

7. Read through the rest of this toolkit and practice

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

8. 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!



Day of Event

9. 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
 - 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 (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 sign in sheet as they arrive
 - Identify who will be stationed at the sign in table greeting guests throughout the duration of your solar open house (ideally a friend or family member friend so you can spend your time talking about your solar system)
 - It is critical that every person who attends your open house signs in, and provides their name, email address, and zip code. This will allow us to follow up with them about solar and have as accurate of a count as possible of the total attendance across the country during the National Solar Tour!**

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- Arrange seating, food, beverages, sign in sheets, and all 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.

10. 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)



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- v. When your tour is complete, bring guests back to the main gathering space.
 - Show guests the Go Solar Guide and the other 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

11. 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 nationwide effort, amplifying your impact and the impacts of other solar homeowners like you in a huge way.

12. Send your sign-in sheets and photos to us

- Email any photos taken during your event to solartour@solarunitedneighbors.org
- Either type up the names, email addresses, and zip codes of your guests into a spreadsheet or scan/photograph the sign in sheets – email 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 2018 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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