The Homeowner's Guide to Choosing a Trusted Solar Installer in Ireland

Everything you need to know to choose the right installer, understand solar and battery systems, and avoid costly mistakes.

✅ 1. What to Expect When Getting Solar Installed

Here's how the process typically works with a trusted installer:

1. **Free site visit**: They'll assess:
    - Roof size, shading, direction, and structure
    - Your fuse board and electricity usage
    - Suitability for solar, battery, and EV charger
2. **Detailed proposal**: You'll receive:
    - System design + estimated generation
    - Breakdown of costs, grant amount, and VAT
    - Equipment brands, warranties, and timeline
3. **Decision & booking**: You choose your preferred system size and any add-ons (battery, EV charger).
4. **SEAI & ESB paperwork**: Installer applies on your behalf.
5. **Installation (1–2 days)**: Panels, inverter, battery/EV charger fitted.
6. **Post-install BER**: Required for SEAI grant.
7. **Grant payment**: Installer submits paperwork, and you receive the payment directly from SEAI (usually within 6–8 weeks).

You don't need to handle paperwork — but it helps to understand the key parts.

⚡ 2. Solar, Batteries & EV Chargers - The Basics

Solar Panels

- Convert daylight into electricity.
- A typical home installs **3–4 kWp**, generating ~2,500–3,400 kWh/year.
- Reduces grid electricity bills significantly.

Batteries

- Store unused solar power for evening/night use.
- Ideal size = match your **daily usage** (typically 5–8 kWh).
- **Only consider oversizing** if you expect to add an EV, heat pump, or increase usage soon.
- If installed **with solar**, batteries are **0% VAT**.
- If installed **later**, full **13.5% VAT** applies — costing you more.

EV Chargers

- Often installed alongside solar to avoid extra labour/disruption.
- Not covered by the grant and always taxed at **13.5% VAT**.
- Still smart to bundle if you plan to buy an EV within 12–24 months.

🧠 3. Basic vs Premium Equipment - What's the Difference?

Component	Basic / Entry	Premium	Why It Matters
Panels	Jinko, Longi	SunPower, REC	Premium = higher efficiency, better low-light performance, longer lifespan
Inverters	Solis, Huawei (standard)	Fronius, SolarEdge, Huawei Hybrid	Premium = quieter, more efficient, hybrid-ready
Batteries	Pylontech, Sigen	Tesla Powerwall, Sonnen, Huawei Luna	Premium = longer life, better monitoring, higher warranty

Important insights:

- **Huawei** systems are *closed-loop* — you must use Huawei batteries and inverters together, which are **more expensive**.
- **Sigenergy** offers an **all-in-one battery/inverter combo** — simpler and often more cost-effective.

Ask your installer why they've chosen a specific brand or system layout.

🔌 4. Hybrid Inverters vs Standard Inverters

- **Hybrid inverters**: Allow your battery + solar system to keep powering your home during a power outage.
- **Standard inverters**: Won't work in a blackout unless you install a **manual changeover switch** — which adds **extra cost** and is **rarely disclosed** unless you ask.

Tip: Always ask whether your system will work during a power cut — and what's required if not.

💶 5. SEAI Grant — How It Works

- **Grant amount**:
  - €900 for the first 2 kWp
  - €300 for each additional kWp (up to 4 kWp total)
  - **Max = €1,800**
- **Conditions**:
  - Home must have been built and occupied before **2021**
  - Installer must be **SEAI-registered**
  - You must get a **BER assessment after installation**
- **Who applies**: Your installer
- **Who gets paid**: You — the homeowner, after completion
- **When**: Typically 6–8 weeks after final paperwork is submitted

Your job:
✅ Choose a SEAI-approved installer
✅ Ensure BER is scheduled post-install
✅ Confirm grant is included in your quote

📈 6. Tariff Optimisation — Maximise Your Battery Value

Batteries save you even more when paired with a **cheap night-rate electricity plan**.

- Suppliers like **Energia, Bord Gáis, SSE** offer night rates from **8–10c/kWh**
- You can charge your battery overnight at low cost, then use it during peak daytime hours
- This **lowers bills even further**, especially in winter when solar is lower

Ask your supplier or installer which tariff suits your system best.

🚩 7. Red Flags to Watch Out For

Avoid any installer who:

- Offers **verbal-only quotes**
- Asks for **cash up front** with no documentation
- Isn't on the **SEAI registered list**
- Doesn't offer **equipment brand or warranty info**
- Pushes a **standard inverter** without explaining limitations
- Won't give **references or case studies**

❓ 8. Key Questions to Ask Installers

1. Are you **SEAI-registered**?
2. Will you handle **all grant paperwork**?
3. What **panel/inverter/battery brands** do you recommend — and why?
4. Can I get **0% VAT on battery** with this install?
5. Will my system work during a **power outage**?
6. Will I need a **manual changeover switch**?
7. What are the **warranties** on parts + labour?
8. Can I see **recent installs or reviews**?

📊 9. How to Compare Quotes — Don't Just Look at Price

Factor	What to Check
System Size (kWp)	Is it right for your roof and usage?
Panel Brand	Premium = better efficiency, slower degradation
Inverter Type	Standard or hybrid? Will it work in outages?
Battery	Included or optional? Capacity (kWh)? VAT status?
Total Cost	Should include VAT and grant discount clearly
Warranties	Equipment (10–25 years), labour (5+ years)
Timeline	When can they install? Do they manage ESB application?

✅ Final Buyer Checklist (Before You Commit)

- SEAI-registered installer with written proposal
- Grant amount clearly included in quote
- Battery installed with solar = 0% VAT
- Equipment brand and warranties listed
- You've asked about hybrid inverter + outage backup
- You feel no pressure to sign
- You're confident in the installer's professionalism

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This guide is for educational purposes only — always verify with your installer and SEAI before committing.