Types of solar panels explained

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Even though solar power is expected to account for almost 60% of the renewable power capacity growth projected for the next 5 years, that"s not to say that we don"t still have a long way to go before this technology is actually perfected.

While the efficiency and durability of different types of solar panels have been steadily improving for a while now, you still have to make some compromises when choosing which kind to install in your home.

That"s why we decided to explain the main differences between the solar panels that are most appropriate for residential use, as well as discuss some technologies which are yet to make their way into our backyards.

The cells for these panels are made by slicing ingots of pure monocrystalline silicon, resulting in pieces with a perfectly uniform crystal structure. While ensuring that the cells can catch as much energy as possible, this structure also makes them more durable than most of the other types and gives them their recognizable, solid coloring.

With efficiency rates sometimes reaching 25%, the fact that they can operate in higher temperatures without significant drops in performance, and their sturdiness, these panels seem like an ideal choice, but they do come with one downside, i.e. their price.

Naturally, as they are more durable and efficient than most of the other types of solar panels, while they might require a more substantial initial investment, they can save you quite a bit of money in the long run.

Also known as multi-crystalline, as their name implies, they are made by combining fragments of different silicon crystals and melting them together. This is responsible for the unevenly blue coloring of these cells, which can help you tell them apart from the other types.

The molten silicon can either be shaped into ingots and cut into wafers - the corners are not rounded off like they are in monocrystalline cells, or it can be stretched into thin strips through a process called edge-defined film-fed growth.

The fact that they can"t boast the uniform crystalline structure of their monocrystalline counterparts means that these cells are less effective and often less durable, but their price still makes them a very popular choice for homeowners and even mostly makes up for their drawbacks.

Not only is it much easier to replace them if their sturdiness turns out to be an issue; but the fact that they are on average not as efficient as monocrystalline panels and only capable of converting 12% to 16% of the energy they receive, only means that they will take up more room than a more efficient panel would need in

order to provide the same output.

In other words, polycrystalline panels might be a perfect choice for people who are not pressed for space and who would like to keep the initial investment as low as possible

Both monocrystalline and polycrystalline cells also come in the bifacial variety. While this technology is relatively new, it is already showing promising results.

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