



Consumer reports best solar generator

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There are many reasons you might lose power, from downed trees or power lines from a storm to technical problems with your area's electrical grid. (A transformer near my home would routinely fail because squirrels kept trying to make a home there.) And if your power does go out, a portable generator is a great way to run not only household essentials like lights and refrigerators but also power lifesaving medical equipment and electronic gear like computers, phones, and routers that help you stay in touch with the outside world. If you live in an area where weather emergencies are relatively rare--or power is often restored within a few hours--you probably don't need a permanently installed whole-house generator, which can cost more than \$10,000 to buy and install.

That's where a portable generator comes in handy. Whether you opt for a traditional portable or the more efficient, quieter, and pricier inverter model option, you'll end up with plenty of power to run most of the key appliances and systems in your home. Even a midsize recreational generator suitable for tailgating, car camping, or van life can help to power some essentials in a pinch.

These workhorses provide 7,000 to more than 8,000 watts of power--but they usually weigh upward of 200 pounds. They're what you want to use to power most or all of your home's essentials during a prolonged outage. If you get one of these generators, you'll probably want to have an electrician install a transfer switch, which allows you to plug the generator into your electrical panel and power hardwired appliances like a water heater or a well pump. Prices for these models currently range from just under \$1,000 to over \$2,000.

These midsize generators provide 2,500 to 4,900-plus watts of power and weigh about 80 to 180 pounds. They pack plenty of power for a boat, an RV, or a camper, or they can power a few household essentials using heavy-duty extension cords. Note both the price and the power output when you're shopping; inverter models that deliver modest amounts of power can be pricier than higher-output traditional portables. Prices range quite widely, from around \$400 to \$2,400.

These generators provide up to 2,500 watts of power and usually weigh around 50 pounds, making them perfect for campsites. You can power a fridge and a few lights with these during a power outage, but for anything beyond that, consider the larger generators above. These more modest units are fuel-efficient and quiet, and you'll pay around \$500 to \$1,200.

While safety is essential, our performance testing ensures that a generator will work as promised when you need it most. To do that, our expert engineers load up every model we assess with a variety of essentials you might want to power during an outage, like a space heater, refrigerator, or window air conditioner.

(Check out our guide to see which size generator can power which appliances.)



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We make sure the generator can handle the load it's supposed to and also see what happens when a sudden spike in voltage hits, such as if, say, the compressor in your refrigerator kicks on when the generator is already close to capacity.

The best models take these spikes in stride, while others bog down or even stall. We also look at how easy it is to move and use a generator, as well as how efficiently it uses gasoline and how long it runs on a full tank.

Solar generators are portable power stations that combine batteries with one or more solar panels to provide electricity almost anywhere you need it.

But, not all solar generators are created equal. They're not all meant for the same purpose, either. Each system has different energy storage capacities, output ports, and maximum power ratings.

No matter how you plan to use a solar generator, at least one will be a great fit for your needs. Our team of solar experts tested a dozen of the latest and greatest portable power stations on the market in 2024 to find the best solar generators for every type of user. You can watch our full video review below or read on to find the right solar-powered generator for you!

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