

How Many Solar Panels Do I Need to Run My Bus?



By Dan Martin

Installing Solar Panels on Your Bus: The Basics

One of the most common projects for DIY solar enthusiasts is to install solar power on your bus. Solar power can give you the freedom to park away from ground power, or to drive almost anywhere in the world without the fear of your fridge running out of power.

While the question of “How Many Solar Panels do I need to power my bus?” may seem simple, the answer depends on what you plan to power inside your bus. Powering a single outlet for charging your phone will require far less energy than a space heater!

There are several kinds of bus setups. Most have separate electrical systems for automotive functions (like turning your engine over), and for coach functions (like vent fans or your water pump). You can typically only use coach functions if you already have a battery installed in your bus. We can use this as a base for our solar installation.

To know how many solar panels you need, we first need to get a good guess of how much energy your appliances will drain. We can think about this energy that powers your appliances using watts and watt/hours.

Calculating Your Energy Needs: Watts and Watt/Hours

You’ve probably heard the term Watts before.

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