Active solar vs passive

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Active solar energy can also refer to systems that use the sun"s heat. But the definition also includes the form of solar power you"re most familiar with. Using solar panels to convert the sun"s energy into household electricity.

Solar energy consists of light and heat generated by nuclear fusion reactions inside the sun. The most frequent modern use of solar energy relies on the photovoltaic effect. Solar power systems capture photons the sun irradiates and convert them into DC electricity.

Photovoltaic (PV) modules -- most commonly solar panels --utilize numerous solar cells under a transparent protective surface like tempered glass to capture the sun"s energy. Solar cells are typically monocrystalline or polycrystalline silicon and conductive metal contacts.

The solar cells inside a PV panel capture solar energy. But a portable power station or other balance of system is required to convert the Direct Current produced by solar panels into usable Alternating Current (AC) or "household" electricity.

Passive solar energy alone will rarely be sufficient to fully heat or cool a home year round -- especially in climates with extremes of heat and cold. Additional HVAC systems will almost certainly be required. But, correctly designed, passive solar systems can be a cost-effective way to at least partially heat or cool your home.

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