



The best renewable energy source

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But which type of renewable energy is the best? We've investigated the major ones – including solar power, wind power, and geothermal energy – further below. Read on to find out.

Although some energy sources boast more advantages than others, there isn't actually one best type of renewable energy. So is that the end of the article already? No, because what the world needs to do is to transition to a mix of renewable energy sources.

The sun isn't always shining and the wind isn't always blowing, so the ideal situation is to have the infrastructure to support many different types of renewable energy, all working in tandem.

Solar power, in the simplest terms, is energy generated from the sun. It's one of the most recognisable forms of renewable energy and you'd be hard-pressed to find someone who isn't aware of what a solar panel is.

The main benefit of solar power is that it's effectively an unlimited source of energy – the sun isn't going anywhere any time soon and is capable of powering the entire world (in theory).

To do so, we'd have to cover an area of roughly 115,625 square miles (mi²) with solar panels. For context, the total land surface area of Earth is roughly 57,308,738 mi², so we'd need just 0.2% of this to provide electricity to everyone using solar power alone.

You can mitigate the need for sunlight by installing large-scale solar batteries, which you charge during the day for use at night. However, these are expensive and typically last just half the lifespan of a solar panel array.

There's also the issue of recycling solar panels, which is a problem the world is currently having to come to terms with. This is because widespread solar panel adoption has only been developing over the past 20 years or so, and solar panels typically last 25 years or more.

Like solar, wind power is one of the best-known forms of renewable energy. Most people have seen a wind turbine, so it's hardly surprising that they're responsible for the majority of the UK's renewable energy generation.

It's an ideal source of renewable energy because wind is an inexhaustible resource, meaning once a wind farm is up and running, we can effectively just leave it to generate free, clean electricity (barring occasional maintenance).



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Wind turbines don't require much investment either, especially when compared to nuclear power plants and even utility-scale solar farms. It costs around £37 per MWh for offshore wind, and roughly £139 per MWh for nuclear, according to asset management firm Lazard.

Though visual pollution is subjective, noise pollution is less so and living near wind turbines can mean putting up with a humming sound – around 43 decibels at a distance of 300m (most fridges have an ambient noise level of 32 to 47 decibels).

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