Electric car charger for house

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Now that the Chevrolet Bolt EV and Tesla Model 3 are on U.S. roads, car shoppers have a choice of more affordable electric vehicles that can go more than 200 miles without a recharge.

These cars will need to be charged, however, and given their longer-than-typical range, that can take some serious time. So when does it make financial sense for an owner to get a high-speed at-home charger installed? It"s not a cheap decision, as they can run from hundreds of dollars to more than $1,000. Key is to choose based on your real needs, not just the potential use outlined in marketing materials. Many electric-vehicle owners will likely find that they on a daily basis, they don"t deplete more of the battery than can be replenished overnight using a basic 120V connection.

Intelligently customizing your EV charging routine can save you cash in the long run and can help you avoid hours wasted waiting to get back on the road once your car battery runs down.

There are several key considerations: Your car"s overall driving range, your personal driving habits, your daily routine, the availability of charging stations along your commute, and whether adding a high-speed charger at home would add real value to your home"s potential resale value.

A chart at the end of this report offers suggestions about which level charger consumers might consider, based on driving needs, including commute times.

Level 1: This is a normal 120-volt connection, which uses any standard household outlet; there are no extra costs here. The downside is that charging times can be painfully slow.

Level 2: This uses a higher-output 240-volt power source, much like one that you"d plug your oven or AC unit into. Charging times are much faster than Level 1. Excluding installation costs, fitting a Level 2 outlet in your home garage typically runs from as low as $300, to approximately $1,200, depending on the make and model of the charger.

Level 3: These fast-charging devices use very high voltage and can add 90 miles of range to an EV in just 30 minutes in some cases. These chargers, however, are extremely expensive, costing tens of thousands of dollars, and routinely using a Level 3 charger can ultimately hurt your car"s battery, so we wouldn"t consider one for home installation. Besides, they are cost prohibitive for most consumers.

Gil Tal, a researcher of transportation and travel behavior at the University of California at Davis, says EV and plug-in hybrid owners should experience their EV vehicles first before making the decision about installing a charger at home.

Check our buying guide and ratings for EV or hybrid vehicles.

Although that might sound obvious, Tal"s research involving 26,000 EV owners in California and his studies in 14 other states showed early adopter EV owners rushed in and installed Level 2 chargers, whether they truly needed them or not.

When it comes to owning an EV, Tal says simple charging solutions are found only at the extremes of daily driving routines. For example, Level 1 home charging simply won"t work for anyone who drives longer distances and has no time, or opportunity, to recharge their car during the day. Upgrading to a Level 2 charger for that owner becomes a necessity, especially if the car is fully electric and there aren"t any public charging stations at the workplace or nearby.

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