



# Solar portable power station reviews

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Be prepared for power outages and off-the-grid outings with these expert ...

If you've ever used a pocket-sized power bank to recharge your phone, you'll appreciate the utility of a portable power station. It's essentially a large rechargeable lithium-ion battery with an array of outlets that you can use to power appliances and other devices, both in your home and on the road.

Unlike a generator, a power station is sleek, quiet, and easy to use. It doesn't saddle you with messy gasoline refills or clogged carburetors. Even more important, it eliminates the potentially deadly carbon monoxide fumes associated with generators.

Before you rush out and buy one, though, consider the trade-offs. Power stations can be pricey and weighty and, well, you have to plug them into an outlet to recharge the battery, which is hard to do when the power's out in your home.

To help you weigh the pros and cons, we recently tested six of the most popular models for emergency prep. They range in price from \$2,000 to \$3,800. All have the capacity to provide backup power for key appliances in your home. They're also quite large--about the size of a beefy microwave oven--and reasonably heavy, stretching from 40 to more than 130 pounds.

If your blackout is relatively short, a power station can deliver what you get with a generator--enough electricity to run essential systems and appliances for a few hours' time. And it does so without the hassle of jump-starting an engine that's been sitting idle in the garage for months.

The number of devices you can power depends on the capacity of the power station, which ranges from 1,800 to 6,000 watts in the models we tested. (The chart below can help you determine what you need.) The run time is measured in watt-hours.

By contrast, a large 6,000-watt power station, like the Anker Solix F3800, can run a refrigerator, lights, and other essentials, such as a furnace or small central air-conditioning unit. It's best if a unit this large is connected to your home's breaker panel via a transfer switch or an interlock device--a piece of equipment that allows you to plug the power station into your electrical panel and run a well pump or other hardwired equipment.

A power station can also be used like an inverter generator to supply power at a campsite or a tailgate party. Indeed, power stations have become an on-the-road staple for those who revel in the adventures of van life.

They're also a bit more flexible than generators in delivering power, because they often supplement the



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standard 110-volt, three-prong outlets with the USB-A and USB-C ports used to power phones, laptops, and portable speakers.

Our expert advice and product reviews will help you get through a natural disaster.

Since it doesn't have an internal combustion engine, a portable power station is very quiet. Many don't even have a cooling fan, so models like the ones we tested are dead silent. While tranquility may not be a huge consideration when your electricity is out, a near-silent power source at a campsite allows you to hear the lilting birdsong of the wood thrush instead of the rumble of a generator.

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