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Subject: Re: How do solar panels work?

Posted by [Blazer](#) on Sat, 06 May 2006 07:49:11 GMT

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<http://science.howstuffworks.com/solar-cell.htm>

websitePhotovoltaic (PV) cells are made of special materials called semiconductors such as silicon, which is currently the most commonly used. Basically, when light strikes the cell, a certain portion of it is absorbed within the semiconductor material. This means that the energy of the absorbed light is transferred to the semiconductor. The energy knocks electrons loose, allowing them to flow freely. PV cells also all have one or more electric fields that act to force electrons freed by light absorption to flow in a certain direction. This flow of electrons is a current, and by placing metal contacts on the top and bottom of the PV cell, we can draw that current off to use externally. For example, the current can power a calculator. This current, together with the cell's voltage (which is a result of its built-in electric field or fields), defines the power (or wattage) that the solar cell can produce.

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