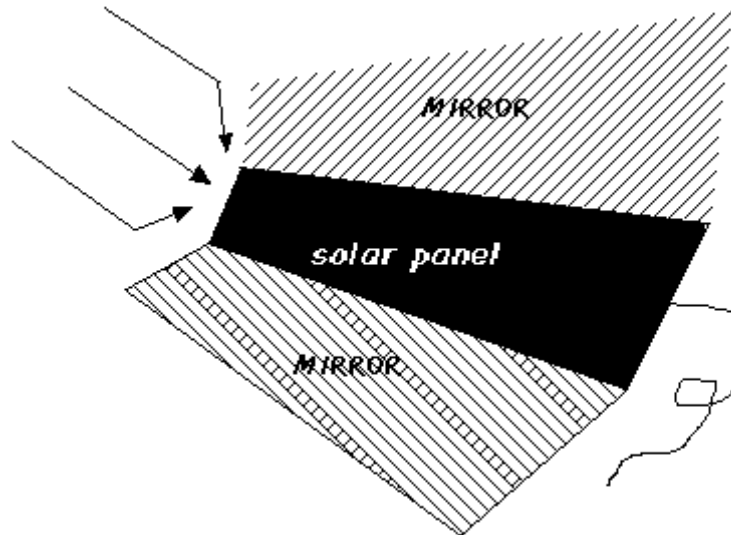


# Optimizing Your Solar Panel

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**Hate the high price of solar panels? Not getting enough juice out of your array because of cloudy days? Stop! Before you buy another panel, make sure you are getting the maximum that you can get from the panels you already own.**

**I wanted to get the most out of my panel and noticed that it was rarely working at maximum output. I recently got a DC refrigerator and realized I'd need three more panels to run it straight off my array. While mirrors are common for passive photovoltaic systems and parabolic reflectors for solar heaters, I haven't noticed mirrors employed for active systems. Fresnel lenses are used to magnify sunlight on cells, but I didn't have any. It occurred to me to reflect beams of light onto my panel from the sides with mirrors. On cloudy days I could get much better performance from my panel with two mirrors set up as above. I still didn't max out my panel, but maybe with more mirrors I can. My testing equipment isn't that great, but I'm getting a much bigger reading.**

**Basically, I spent a few dollars on cracked, broken mirrors at the thrift store and got the equivalent of a couple hundred dollars more solar panels (on a cloudy day).**

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