

CHINA MARKET GUIDE

China Sourcing Checklist

34 field-tested checkpoints to avoid scams, verify factories and land your order safely.

FREE EDITION · 2026

BEFORE YOU CONTACT ANYONE

- ☐ Define product spec: materials, dimensions, certifications, target unit cost
- ☐ Set your landed-cost ceiling (factory price + freight + duty + VAT)
- ☐ Decide MOQ you can actually sell through in 6 months — not what factories ask
- ☐ Write a 5-line supplier outreach email template (spec + qty + Incoterm + question)
- ☐ Check HS code & duty rate for your country before comparing prices

FINDING & VERIFYING SUPPLIERS

- ☐ Cross-check supplier on 3 sources: Alibaba, 1688, import records (ImportYeti)
- ☐ Ask for business license + export license photos (blurry = red flag)
- ☐ Video-call the factory: ask them to walk the production line live
- ☐ Search company name + 'scam' / 'complaint' in English AND Chinese
- ☐ Verify the bank account is a corporate account — never pay a personal account
- ☐ Request 2 references from buyers in your country

SAMPLES & QUOTES (PI STAGE)

- ☐ Get quotes from minimum 3 factories on identical specs
- ☐ Confirm quote includes: FOB port, tooling cost, packaging spec, lead time
- ☐ Order pre-production sample; keep it as the quality reference contract
- ☐ Proforma invoice must list: model, materials, unit price, MOQ, payment terms, validity
- ☐ Agree payment terms: 30/70 max for first order; avoid full prepayment
- ☐ Confirm who owns the tooling/mold if you pay for it

PRODUCTION & QC

- ☐ Set inspection gates: during production + final random inspection (AQL 2.5)
- ☐ Book third-party inspection ~\$150-300/day — never rely on factory self-QC
- ☐ Define defect classification in writing before production starts
- ☐ Photos + video at 50% completion; react to problems while still fixable
- ☐ Retain golden sample signed & dated by both sides

SHIPPING & DELIVERY

- ☐ Compare freight forwarder quotes: LCL vs FCL break-even at ~15 CBM
- ☐ Confirm Incoterms: FOB is default-safe for beginners; EXW shifts risk to you
- ☐ Check container loading supervision for orders > \$20k (anti-shortship)
- ☐ Prepare documents: commercial invoice, packing list, B/L, CO/Form if applicable
- ☐ Insure cargo (110% of invoice value) — marine insurance is cheap
- ☐ Plan for CNY shutdown: no production for 2-3 weeks around Chinese New Year

RED FLAGS — WALK AWAY IF

- ☐ Price is 30%+ below every other quote on the same spec
- ☐ Pressure to pay via Western Union or to a personal account
- ☐ Refuses video call or factory visit without 'restructuring reasons'
- ☐ Certificate copies that look edited (check issuing body websites)
- ☐ PI changes terms after you agreed them verbally