

Free China Sourcing Cost Checklist

A quick pre-order checklist for Etsy, Shopify, and small ecommerce sellers sourcing from Alibaba or China-based suppliers.

Use this before you pay for samples, compare supplier quotes, or place a first MOQ order.

1. Hidden Cost Checklist

- Unit product cost
- MOQ and planned order quantity
- Sample, tooling, mold, or setup cost
- Packaging, label, insert, carton, and barcode cost
- China domestic freight from factory to forwarder or port
- Inspection, prep, agent, or consolidation cost
- International freight, courier, air, sea, rail, or DDP quote
- Duty, tariff, import tax, brokerage, clearance, or port fee
- Payment processing fee, bank fee, PayPal fee, and FX spread
- Defect, damage, replacement, return, and refund reserve
- Platform fee, payment fee, fixed transaction fee, and outbound shipping

2. Supplier Questions to Ask Before Samples

- What exactly is included in the quoted unit price?
- Is the quote EXW, FOB, CIF, DDP, or another trade term?
- Can you break down product cost, packaging cost, tooling/setup, and domestic freight?
- What is the sample cost, sample lead time, and sample shipping cost?
- Can MOQ be split across colors, sizes, or variants?
- What is the production lead time after deposit and final confirmation?
- What documents, test reports, certificates, or factory proof can you provide?
- Can you confirm carton size, carton weight, units per carton, and packaging options?
- What payment method is available for the first order?
- Can you summarize the final agreed specification in one message before payment?

3. Red Flags Worth Slowing Down For

- Very low price but unclear quote details
- Supplier avoids written specification confirmation
- No clear sample details before payment
- Cannot explain MOQ, lead time, packaging, or trade terms

- Certificate or compliance claims without matching documents
- Pressure to pay quickly outside a protected platform
- Photos, catalog, or factory claims look inconsistent
- Poor communication when you ask basic cost breakdown questions

4. Simple Decision Rule

- If the supplier cannot answer basic quote questions, do not pay for a sample yet.
- If landed cost is unknown, do not decide from supplier unit price alone.
- If margin only works when everything goes perfectly, treat the product as risky.
- If you are comparing suppliers, send the same RFQ message to each one.
- If you are close to ordering, write down assumptions and confirm final specs before payment.

Next Step

If this checklist shows that your sourcing decision is still unclear, use a structured workbook before spending money on samples or MOQ.

- Use a supplier vetting toolkit when you need to compare supplier risk.
- Use an RFQ and quote comparison kit when supplier replies are scattered.
- Use a landed cost and margin calculator when you need to know whether a product still makes money after hidden costs.

Important limitation

This free checklist is for planning and education only. It does not verify suppliers and does not provide customs, tax, legal, accounting, compliance, financial, or quality-inspection advice.