

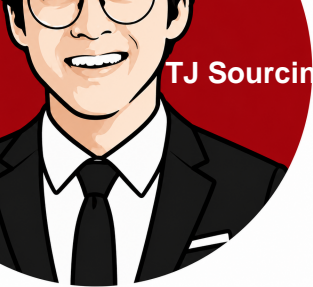
# The checklist I send every founder before they spend a dollar.

Twenty-three questions, five sections. The same walkthrough I do on every intake call. Print it. Use it. If you get stuck on any line, that's exactly the moment to email me.

## SECTION 01

### Before you talk to anyone

- Write a one-paragraph spec in plain English.**  
What it is, what it does, who it's for. If you can't explain it in three sentences, no factory will quote it accurately.
- Sketch or photograph every part.**  
Even napkin-quality drawings beat verbal descriptions. Front, back, side. Include a reference object for scale.
- Decide your target first-run quantity and your projected annual volume.**  
Factories quote completely differently for 200 vs. 2,000 vs. 20,000. Vague answers get vague quotes.
- Set a target unit cost you'd be happy with.**  
Don't tell the factory yet. Knowing it lets you spot quotes that are 3x off market without anchoring the negotiation.
- Identify the 2–3 things that absolutely cannot vary.**  
Material? Tolerance? Color? Cert (FCC, UL, FDA)? Every other dimension is a negotiation lever.

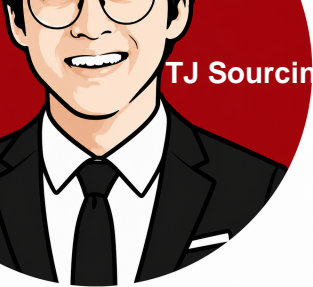


## SECTION 02

## Before you send a single dollar

- Get the factory's business license number and verify it.**  
Real factories in China have an 18-digit Unified Social Credit Code. Trading companies have one too — the license type tells you which.
- Ask for photos of the actual production line, with today's date written on a piece of paper.**  
If they hesitate or send stock photos, they are a trading company, not a factory.
- Ask for two other US clients they currently work with.**  
Then email those clients directly. This single step kills 60% of bad suppliers.
- Never wire 100% upfront. Standard terms are 30/70 — 30% on PO, 70% on shipment.**  
If a factory insists on 100% upfront for anything beyond tooling, walk away.
- Confirm Incoterms in writing.**  
FOB Shenzhen vs. EXW vs. DDP changes who pays for freight, customs, and insurance. Don't assume.

The #1 mistake: sending money to a Shenzhen WeChat account that turns out to be a trading company posing as a factory. The fix is on this page — verify the license and visit (or have someone visit) the production line.



## SECTION 03

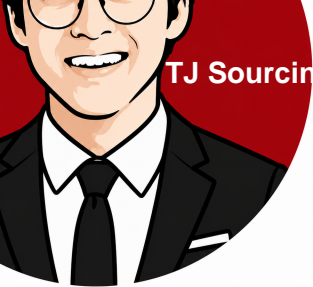
## When samples arrive

- Check the samples against your spec, line by line. Don't trust your gut.**  
Bring a caliper. Measure the dimensions that matter. Photograph any deviation.
- Push samples to failure.**  
Drop them. Soak them. Run the duty cycle. Better to break a \$50 sample than a \$50K production run.
- Document every change you want before sign-off.**  
Email the factory a numbered list. Get them to confirm each one in writing, in both languages if you can.
- Sign a golden sample.**  
Physically sign and date one approved sample. The factory keeps one, you keep one. This is the spec for the production run.

## SECTION 04

## During production

- Ask for first-off photos before the full run starts.**  
The first 5 units off the line tell you whether the factory translated your spec correctly. Catching drift here saves a full run.
- Get a mid-run QC report.**  
Photos, defect counts, anything that drifted. A factory that resists this is one you don't want to work with.
- Inspect before shipment — yourself or via a third-party (SGS, Bureau Veritas, AsiaInspection).**  
Once it's on the boat, it's yours. Inspection costs \$300–500 and is the cheapest insurance in this entire process.
- Verify the HS code on the customs paperwork.**  
Wrong HS codes mean held shipments and surprise duty bills. Confirm it before the container leaves the port.



SECTION 05

## Red flags — walk away if you see these

- The 'factory' uses a Gmail or QQ address, not a corporate domain.**
- They quote you within an hour of a complex inquiry.**  
Real factories cost out a quote. Trading companies guess.
- They refuse a video call from the production floor.**
- They want full payment to a personal bank account.**
- Their MOQ is suspiciously low for a custom part.**  
If they can do a custom injection-molded part at MOQ 50, they're buying off-the-shelf and rebranding it.

WHEN YOU'RE READY

### Send me a project — I respond within 24 hours.

\$100 deposit covers the sourcing work and sample run. Refunded in full on your first shipment. 8% on shipment, factory cost itemized, no hidden fees.

[tjsourcing.com/intake](https://tjsourcing.com/intake)