



THE LIFA BUYER SERIES / 01

Buying from China

Supplier verification & first-order playbook

Choose suppliers with better questions.
Turn the answers into a clear buying decision.

A PRACTICAL GUIDE + FILLABLE WORKSHEETS

01

Verify

Identity, capability
and payment details

02

Compare

The same product,
scope and cost basis

03

Approve

Evidence, conditions
and a named owner

START HERE

Make each decision with evidence.

Use this guide for a first order, a new supplier or a material product change. Keep one saved copy for each supplier and order.

Before you commit	Evidence to have in hand
Request a quotation	A dated product brief, destination and quantity breakdown.
Pay a deposit	Matched legal and payment identities, an agreed specification, and resolved material risks.
Start production	A documented sample approval and written order terms.
Release goods / balance	The agreed checks, exception decisions and shipment documents.

Find the page you need

Write the brief	03	Verify identity	04
Check capability	05	Compare quotes	06
Quote worksheet	07	Approve the sample	08
Plan quality checks	09	Confirm terms & payment	10
Prepare shipping	11	Supplier checklist	12
Deposit decision	14	Order tracker	15

Use it digitally or print it

Download and open the PDF in a form-capable reader. Fill the light-gray fields, save a copy, then reopen it to confirm your entries were saved. You can also print blank worksheets. Attach longer evidence in a separate folder and record its file reference here.

This is a working process, not a supplier guarantee or a substitute for product-specific legal, customs or testing advice. Requirements depend on the product and destination. Official reference links are on page 16.

Write a brief suppliers can price.

Send the same revision to every supplier. Replace "premium" or "good quality" with a material, measurement or pass/fail requirement.

PRODUCT / INTERNAL REFERENCE

REVISION / DATE / BUYER OWNER

INTENDED USE / DESTINATION COUNTRY / SALES CHANNEL

QUANTITY / BREAKDOWN BY VARIANT

TARGET CARGO-READY DATE / DEADLINE

MATERIALS / DIMENSIONS / TOLERANCES / PERFORMANCE

BRANDING / UNIT PACK / CARTON / LABELS / ARTWORK REVISION

TESTS / DESTINATION REQUIREMENTS / ACCEPTANCE METHOD / OWNER

REFERENCE FILES / DRAWINGS / SAMPLE IDS / UNRESOLVED QUESTIONS

Ask for exceptions in writing

Request unit price, minimum quantity by variant, sample/tooling costs, lead-time trigger, quote validity, payment stages and the trade term with a named place. List every deviation from this brief.

Know who you are buying from.

A website, marketplace badge or English trading name is a starting point. Build a document trail that connects the actual seller, operating site and payment recipient.

1. Get the legal record

Request a clear current business license, the Chinese legal name and Unified Social Credit Code. For a mainland Chinese entity, use the National Enterprise Credit Information Publicity System to check the exact record. Save the result and the date. For an entity registered elsewhere, use that jurisdiction's official registry. [1]

2. Reconcile the transaction parties

Compare the legal entity across the quotation, Proforma Invoice, purchase order or contract, and beneficiary details. Record the registered address and the actual production address separately. A factory, trader and export company may have different roles; ask who signs, manufactures, exports and receives money.

3. Resolve mismatches before payment

A related export company can be legitimate, but its relationship and responsibilities need evidence. Request the written explanation and supporting agreement, confirm authority through a trusted channel, and have the buyer review the arrangement. Do not treat a company stamp alone as proof.

What you receive	What you still need to establish
Business license	That the current registry record matches the contracting company.
Factory photos or video	That this supplier controls the relevant site and process.
Bank details on an invoice	That the recipient and account instructions are independently confirmed.

Hold the decision when

Identity cannot be confirmed; a material mismatch is unexplained; documents appear altered; or the supplier refuses to identify the contracting party. Record the open issue on pages 12-14 instead of assigning a reassuring score.

Check the process behind the sample.

Choose a supplier whose actual operations fit your product and order. A trader can be a good partner when its role and production arrangements are clear.

Ask questions that reveal the workflow

Production: Which steps happen at your site? Which are outsourced, and where?

Capacity: What output is realistic for this specification and your current workload?

Control: Who checks incoming materials, work in progress and finished goods?

Change: How will you obtain approval before changing a component or subcontractor?

Match the evidence to the risk

Use a live walk-through, a site visit or an independent audit where the order justifies it. Ask to follow the relevant process, identify equipment and view records for comparable work. A video helps orient the review; it does not replace an inspection, audit or product test.

Evidence	Make the check specific
Capacity plan	Order quantity, production steps, available line time, bottlenecks and scheduling assumptions.
Quality records	Recent records from the same site and a comparable product; trace defects to actions taken.
Management-system certificate	Exact entity, site, scope, issuing body and validity. ISO itself does not issue certificates. [2]
Product test report	Exact model, materials, version, tested requirements and issuing laboratory. Confirm whether the intended variant is covered.

A useful question to send

"Please show how this product moves from incoming material to packed carton. Mark outsourced steps, the checks at each stage, and who can approve a change to the agreed specification."

Compare the same buying decision.

Get the same specification, quantity, packaging, currency, named delivery point and exclusions in every quotation. An empty cost cell is an unanswered question, not zero.

Worked example: the lowest unit price is not the lowest total

Fictional illustration only. 1,000 identical units, USD, the same agreed handover point. These are not LIFA prices or current freight estimates.

Same cost boundary	Supplier A	Supplier B	Supplier C
Product price per unit	\$4.80	\$5.10	\$5.00
Product subtotal (1,000 units)	\$4,800	\$5,100	\$5,000
Required packaging	\$350	Included	\$200
Tooling / setup	\$400	\$250	\$350
Checks / sample allowance	\$300	\$300	\$300
Costs to the same handover point	\$250	\$200	\$300
Comparable pre-import subtotal	\$6,100	\$5,850	\$6,150
Subtotal per ordered unit	\$6.10	\$5.85	\$6.15

What the calculation tells you

B is \$250 below A on the stated cost basis. That is a cost comparison, not approval of B. Identity, compliance, capability, quality and payment questions still need to pass their own review.

Complete the budget before choosing

The example excludes international freight beyond the handover point, insurance, duty, import taxes, brokerage, destination charges and delivery. Add those separately using current, written inputs for your route and product. Record assumptions, quote expiry and contingency; avoid double-counting charges already included.

Comparison subtotal = product subtotal + separately charged packaging + tooling/setup + checks/samples + costs to the common handover point. Keep one-time costs visible; confirm whether repeat orders remove them.

Put three quotations on one basis.

Enter figures in one currency. Mark each amount "quoted" or "estimate" in your evidence file. This worksheet does not calculate totals automatically.

PRODUCT / SPECIFICATION REVISION / QUANTITY / CURRENCY / COMMON HANDOVER POINT

Comparison item	A	B	C
Supplier / quote reference			
Unit price			
Product subtotal			
Extra packaging			
Tooling / setup			
Checks / samples			
To common handover point			
Comparable subtotal			
Onward freight / insurance			
Duty / tax / destination			
Estimated total budget			
Lead time / start trigger			

EXCLUSIONS / UNCONFIRMED CHARGES / EVIDENCE REFERENCES / NEXT QUESTIONS

Use page 14 to record your decision. A quotation that fails a critical check should not win because its price is lower. Recheck the quantity basis, exchange rate and whether import taxes are recoverable before comparing budgets.

Make the approved sample traceable.

A nice-looking sample is not a complete production instruction. Define what the sample represents, what remains different, and which written requirements still apply.

Choose the right sample stage

Stock sample: useful for an initial capability check; may not use your materials or tooling.

Customized sample: tests the proposed specification and artwork.

Pre-production reference: records the agreed configuration before volume manufacture. Ask whether it uses the intended materials, tooling and process.

Write measurable acceptance points

Use dated drawings, dimensions and tolerances, material grades, functional tests, finish references, color references and packaging requirements. Mark critical-to-use features. Where laboratory testing is needed, confirm the test scope and sample selection with the responsible specialist before dispatching samples.

Check	Record in the approval file
Identification	Supplier, product/model, sample ID, specification revision and date received.
Results	Actual measurements, test method, photos and pass/fail outcomes against agreed criteria.
Deviations	Each difference; whether it is accepted, needs correction, or requires a new sample.
Reference control	Who retains which reference, how it is labeled, and which written specification governs.

Production starts after a clear written release

Send an approval or rejection tied to the exact revision. Include every condition, the person who can accept changes, and the requirement to obtain approval before substitutions. Keep rejected and superseded samples clearly labeled.

Copy-ready message: "Sample [ID], specification [revision], reviewed [date]: [approved / revise / rejected]. Outstanding deviations: [list]. No substitutions or subcontractor changes without written approval from [owner]."

Agree the checks before production.

An inspection is useful when the inspector knows what to measure, what counts as a defect, and who decides what happens after the report.

Stage	Questions to settle
Before production	Are materials, specification, packaging, sample reference and test methods agreed?
During production	Which difficult-to-correct features need an early check? What would trigger a stop or corrective action?
Before shipment	What completed and packed quantity must be available? Which checks, sampling plan and report are required?
Loading / dispatch	Which quantity, carton, shipping-mark, condition and seal records are needed?

Make the inspection brief unambiguous

Identify the purchase order, variants, batch sizes, approved reference, critical dimensions, functions, labels and packaging. Define defect categories and acceptance rules with the inspector. Include photos of acceptable and unacceptable conditions where useful. Agree access, timing, test equipment and who pays for a repeat check.

Use the report to make a release decision

Review the actual findings and supporting photos. For each failure, choose correction and reinspection, documented acceptance of a specific deviation, or another agreed remedy. A supplier promise to fix goods later is not evidence that the correction was completed.

Sampling is not a guarantee

Checking a sample cannot prove that every unit is defect-free. Do not copy a generic acceptance level without considering the product risk. Safety, regulatory and critical functional requirements may require separate testing or controls beyond a visual inspection.

A management-system certificate, a product test report and an order inspection answer different questions. Keep all three evidence types separate and trace each to the relevant entity, site, model or batch.

Confirm terms before paying.

Agree the terms before transferring funds. No payment method removes the need to verify the supplier, beneficiary and order conditions.

One consistent order record

Include legal parties; product and specification revision; quantities by variant; price and currency; packaging; delivery term and named place; lead-time trigger; payment stages; inspection and acceptance rules; change control; and required shipping documents. Agree how defects, delays and disputes will be handled. Obtain suitable legal review for the transaction.

Tie payments to evidence

Agree the amount, recipient, currency, due date and supporting evidence for each payment. Before a balance payment, confirm the release conditions in the contract and your own approval record. If using a platform or protected transaction service, read its actual coverage, deadlines and claim conditions; keep the transaction within the agreed channel.

Before every transfer - especially after a change

Check	Action
Beneficiary	Match the approved legal recipient and documented commercial arrangement.
Bank instruction	Verify new or changed details through an independently obtained or previously verified phone contact. Do not rely on the number in the change request. [3]
Internal approval	Have the payment owner review the matched documents and recorded confirmation.
Traceability	Retain the approved instructions, confirmation date, transfer reference and receipt.

Stop on an unexplained change

Urgency, a new contact address, a personal account, or a different company recipient calls for investigation before payment. If a fraudulent transfer is suspected, contact the bank immediately and use the appropriate reporting channel. [3]

Plan the shipping handover.

Confirm who arranges each step, who pays each charge, where risk changes hands, and which documents your importer and broker need.

Name the delivery point precisely

Record the agreed Incoterms rule, exact named place or port and edition, then confirm its allocation with the supplier and forwarder. ICC's Incoterms 2020 guidance explains cost, risk and delivery responsibilities. Keep price, payment, acceptance and other contract terms explicit. [4]

Confirm the product and destination requirements

Identify the importer, intended use, product classification and applicable labels, tests, registrations or permits before committing. Ask the responsible broker or adviser to verify the classification, valuation inputs and route-specific charges. For EU imports, the European Commission links to Access2Markets for tariffs, formalities and product requirements. [5]

Before booking	Before release
Carton count, dimensions and gross/net weights	Reconcile the final Packing List with the packed goods.
Commodity, batteries/liquids or other special handling	Confirm carrier acceptance and required supporting documents.
Freight scope, quote validity and excluded charges	Confirm booking, pickup details, cargo cutoff and handover contact.
Insurance scope and responsible party	Check the agreed cover and claim evidence requirements.
Importer / consignee / broker instructions	Review Commercial Invoice, Packing List and transport-document details.

Arrival is still part of the order

Check delivered quantities and condition promptly. Retain photos, packaging and delivery records for any discrepancy. Follow the actual contract, carrier and insurance notice deadlines, and record the corrective action before reordering.

Supplier evidence checklist

Use Verified only after reviewing evidence. Explain Not applicable. An unresolved critical issue means Hold; a total score cannot override it.

SUPPLIER / ORDER REFERENCE / REVIEW DATE

01 Legal identity

Not checked

Current legal name and registry record match the supplied license.

Evidence / issue

02 Contracting party

Not checked

Quotation and order identify the correct legal seller.

Evidence / issue

03 Operating role

Not checked

Factory, trader, exporter and subcontractor roles are documented.

Evidence / issue

04 Production location

Not checked

The relevant site and its relationship to the seller are evidenced.

Evidence / issue

05 Capacity and schedule

Not checked

Process, workload, capacity assumptions and timing fit this order.

Evidence / issue

06 Quality controls

Not checked

Records and inspection controls apply to this product and site.

Evidence / issue

07 Certificate scope

Not checked

Entity, site, issuer, scope and validity of relevant certificates checked.

Evidence / issue

08 Product requirements

Not checked

Destination and product requirements assigned to a qualified owner.

Evidence / issue

Supplier evidence checklist

Use Verified only after reviewing evidence. Explain Not applicable. An unresolved critical issue means Hold; a total score cannot override it.

SUPPLIER / ORDER REFERENCE / REVIEW DATE

09 Sample and specification

Not checked

Approved sample ID, written revision and deviations are recorded.

Evidence / issue

10 Quote comparability

Not checked

Quantity, currency, delivery point, exclusions and validity aligned.

Evidence / issue

11 Beneficiary identity

Not checked

Recipient matches the approved entity or documented arrangement.

Evidence / issue

12 Bank confirmation

Not checked

Instructions independently confirmed; material changes rechecked.

Evidence / issue

13 Order terms

Not checked

Payment, release, changes, remedies and documents agreed in writing.

Evidence / issue

14 Relevant restrictions

Not checked

Applicable restricted-party, trade and public-record issues reviewed.

Evidence / issue

15 Residual risk and owner

Not checked

Open risks, conditions, responsible buyer and next review recorded.

Evidence / issue

Evidence filing: use a reference such as 03_license_2026-09-20.pdf. Keep the underlying document, its source and the review date. Repeat the checklist when the legal party, bank details, site or specification changes.

Record the deposit decision.

Use this after reviewing the checklist. A conditional decision permits only the stated next action; it does not silently authorize payment or production.

SUPPLIER LEGAL NAME / PRODUCT / QUOTE AND SPECIFICATION REFERENCES

DECISION

REVIEW DATE

Hold - unresolved issues

EVIDENCE SUPPORTING THE DECISION / FILE REFERENCES

UNRESOLVED RISKS / MISSING EVIDENCE / CONSEQUENCES

REQUIRED ACTION / RESPONSIBLE OWNER / DUE DATE / EVIDENCE NEEDED TO CLOSE

EXACT NEXT STEP AUTHORIZED / PAYMENT AMOUNT AND CURRENCY IF APPROVED

BUYER DECISION OWNER / ROLE

SECOND REVIEWER / NEXT REVIEW DATE

Typed names identify the reviewers of this working record. Keep any required contractual authorization with the order file. Reopen the decision if a material fact changes.

Keep the first order connected.

Assign one owner to each handover. Dates are agreed commitments or recorded updates, not assumptions. Attach the relevant release evidence.

PURCHASE ORDER / SUPPLIER / PRODUCT REVISION / BUYER OWNER

Milestone	Due date	Owner	Status
Sample approved			Not started
Deposit released			Not started
Production starts			Not started
Inspection reviewed			Not started
Shipping docs agreed			Not started
Goods / balance released			Not started
Arrival checked			Not started

RELEASE EVIDENCE / EXCEPTION APPROVALS / SHIPMENT REFERENCE

ARRIVAL FINDINGS / CLAIM ACTION AND DEADLINE / IMPROVEMENT BEFORE REORDER

For any failed check: record the issue, owner, deadline and required evidence. Do not mark a milestone complete until its acceptance condition has been met or an authorized exception is recorded.

KEEP THIS PAGE

Useful references. A clear next step.

Use the official source for the decision in front of you. Requirements and services can change; recheck the relevant page before relying on it.

[1] China enterprise registry

Mainland entity record lookup by legal name or registration identifier. The portal may require verification or local access.

[2] ISO: understanding certification

Distinguishes ISO standards from the independent bodies that carry out certification.

[3] FBI: business email compromise

Practical guidance on independently confirming payment requests and changes to bank details.

[4] ICC: Incoterms 2020

Official starting point for the rules allocating delivery obligations, cost and risk.

[5] European Commission: importing into the EU

Links to Access2Markets for tariffs, formalities and product requirements.

Reference edition: 20 September 2026. The registry is included as an official lookup route; no individual supplier verification is implied. This guide contains no endorsement or approval of a supplier.

Bring your next sourcing question to LIFA

Have a product link, drawing or supplier quotation? Share the product, quantity and destination, plus the issue you want resolved. We can discuss supplier search, samples, inspections or shipping coordination and agree the scope before work starts.

Start a sourcing request: lifasourcing.com/request-quote/

Read the online buyer guides | Get the spreadsheet-friendly checklist (CSV)

Free for your internal sourcing work. Keep the LIFA attribution when sharing an unchanged copy. Do not send bank credentials, passwords or unnecessary personal data with a sourcing inquiry.