ChinaSourcing

FREE BUYER RESOURCE · 01

Canton Fair Basic Checklist

What to decide, bring and ask before your first visit to the China Import and Export Fair.

A one-page-per-topic preparation checklist for international buyers. It covers the decisions that are expensive to change later, the questions worth asking at a booth, and how to leave with quotes you can actually compare.

VERSION	INFORMATION CHECKED	PRICE
1.1	19 November 2026	Free — no email required

Free to download and share. General preparation information — not an official fair document, and not immigration, customs or legal advice.

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HOW TO USE IT

Tick items as you complete them. Anything marked "confirm" should be checked on the official Canton Fair website before you book, because dates, badge rules and hall layouts are set by the organiser and can change between sessions.

01

Decide these three things first

Almost every costly mistake traces back to one of these decisions being made late.

1

Which phase matches your products

Each session runs in three phases, and each phase covers different product groups. Attending the wrong phase means walking halls that have nothing you buy. Check your exact product against the official section list, not a summary.

2

How many days you can actually work the halls

Two full days in one phase is a realistic first visit. Three days lets you revisit shortlisted suppliers and compare quotes properly. One day is enough only for a single, narrow product section.

3

Whether you are buying or shortlisting

The fair is a meeting and shortlisting environment. Very little is decided on the floor. If you arrive expecting to place a production order, you will rush the part that matters — comparing suppliers.

DATES ARE SET BY THE ORGANISER

The dates below were taken from the official notice for the 141st session and confirmed on 17 November 2026. Always re-check cantonfair.org.cn before booking flights or hotels — sessions, phase lengths and product groupings are adjusted between editions.

NOTES

02

The three phases at a glance

Broad product groups only. The official site publishes the full section list for each phase.

PHASE	DATES (141ST SESSION)	BROAD PRODUCT GROUPS
Phase 1	15–19 April 2027	Home appliances, consumer electronics, industrial automation, machinery, power equipment, vehicles and parts, bicycles, lighting, hardware and tools
Phase 2	23–27 April 2027	Houseware, kitchenware, ceramics, glassware, home decoration, garden products, gifts, watches, building and decorative materials, furniture
Phase 3	1–5 May 2027	Textiles and fabrics, apparel, shoes, bags and luggage, office supplies, health and medical devices, food, sports and leisure, personal care

If your range straddles two phases, pick the phase where most of your spending sits, then use the days between phases for factory visits instead of waiting in Guangzhou.

Venue	China Import and Export Fair Complex, No. 382 Yuejiang Zhong Road, Haizhu District, Guangzhou 510335
How to confirm	cantonfair.org.cn — dates, phases, section lists, buyer registration

NOTES

03

Registration and documents

Register through official channels only. Requirements differ by buyer type and nationality.

- [ ] Passport valid well beyond your return date
- [ ] Buyer badge registered through the official Canton Fair channels — not a third-party agent
- [ ] Printed and digital copies of your passport photo page
- [ ] Confirmation of your registration, saved offline as well as in email
- [ ] Two spare passport photos, in case a counter asks for one
- [ ] Hotel booking covering every night of your stay
- [ ] Return or onward ticket
- [ ] Travel insurance policy number and assistance line
- [ ] Company profile, one page, printed in 20–30 copies
- [ ] Business cards

CONFIRM, DO NOT ASSUME

The accepted document set, any fee, and whether your badge covers more than one phase are all set by the organiser and vary by buyer type. Check the buyer registration page on the official site for your nationality before you book anything. This checklist cannot replace that page.

NOTES

04

Six-week preparation timeline

Working backwards from the opening day is easier than working forwards from today.

1. **Six weeks out — register and book**
   Register for your badge, book flights and a hotel you can cancel, and confirm which phase you are attending.

2. **Four weeks out — build the target list**
   Use the official exhibitor directory to shortlist 15–25 companies with booth numbers, sorted by hall. A list is the difference between a productive day and 30,000 steps of browsing.

3. **Three weeks out — prepare the paperwork**
   One-page company profile, product specification sheets, reference photos, and your target FOB price, acceptable MOQ and non-negotiable certifications written down.

4. **Two weeks out — sort money and data**
   Two cards from different networks enabled for overseas use, a mobile payment app installed and tested, and a working data plan decided before you land.

5. **One week out — print and pack**
   Print the target list, the profile and this checklist. Download offline maps. Charge the power bank.

6. **The day before — walk the route**
   Confirm the metro or taxi route to the complex, check the hall opening time on the official site, and lay out what you carry.

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05

What to carry each day

Halls are large, queues are long, and phone batteries die at the worst moment.

- [ ] Passport or buyer badge, plus a photo of both on your phone
- [ ] Target list with booth numbers, printed
- [ ] Company profile sheets and business cards
- [ ] Notebook and two pens — write the booth number on every page
- [ ] Tape measure, if your product has dimensions that matter
- [ ] Sample bags and a marker
- [ ] Charged power bank, within airline limits
- [ ] Phone storage cleared for catalogue photos
- [ ] Water and something to eat between halls
- [ ] Comfortable shoes; the floor is hard and the day is long
- [ ] A card or payment app that works locally for lunch
- [ ] Folder for catalogues, so they survive the trip home

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06

Ten questions worth asking at a booth

Ask the same questions in the same order at every booth. That is what makes quotes comparable later.

ASK	WHY IT MATTERS
Are you the manufacturer or a trading company?	A trading company normally has to refer a mould or certification change back to the factory. The answer tells you who you are really dealing with.
Which factory makes this, and where is it?	You will want a plant visit before a large order.
What is the MOQ per model, and per colour?	Two different numbers. Ask both.
What is the unit price at my quantity, and at double?	Reveals how much of the price is fixed cost.
Which Incoterm are you quoting?	A price without an Incoterm cannot be compared with another quote.
What is the sample cost, and is it credited?	Sample fees are sometimes deducted from a later order — but only if you ask.
Which certifications do you hold for my market?	Ask for the report, not the badge on the wall.
What is your lead time for a repeat order?	First orders are often faster than the second one.
How do you handle a quality complaint?	The answer tells you whether a process exists.
Who will handle my order after the fair?	The person at the booth is often not the person you will email.

NOTES

07

Record every quote the same way

Photograph the booth number with the product. Without it, the photo is nearly useless the next day.

BOOTH	SUPPLIER	PRODUCT / MODEL	UNIT PRICE	MOQ	LEAD TIME	NOTES

TWO NUMBERS THAT DECIDE EVERYTHING LATER

Write the Incoterm next to every price, and the quantity that price applies to. Most "cheaper" quotes turn out to be quoted at a different quantity, a different Incoterm, or without packaging.

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08

The first seven days after the fair

Deals are lost in the week after the fair, not at it.

1. **Day 1 — message every shortlisted supplier**
   A short email or WeChat message summarising what you discussed. It also tests whether they respond.

2. **Day 2 — build the comparison sheet**
   Put every quote into one table, on one currency basis, with the Incoterm recorded.

3. **Day 3 — order paid samples**
   From the top three. Pay for them where you can: a free sample is often a display unit rather than the version that will come off the line, and paying also gives you a cost to compare against the quotation.

4. **Day 4–5 — ask the awkward questions**
   Certification reports for your exact model, repeat-order lead time, and what happens if the defect rate is too high.

5. **Day 6–7 — decide who to visit next time**
   Book factory visits for your next trip, or ask for a video walkthrough now.

NOTES

09

Common first-visit mistakes

- [ ] Attending the phase that does not cover your product
- [ ] Walking the halls without a target list
- [ ] Collecting catalogues instead of quotes with quantities and Incoterms
- [ ] Comparing a price at 500 units with a price at 5,000 units
- [ ] Not asking whether the booth is a factory or a trader
- [ ] Accepting a certification claim without seeing the report
- [ ] Leaving without the name of the person who will handle your order
- [ ] Booking a non-refundable hotel before your badge is confirmed

NOTES

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Sources and how to verify them

Everything time-sensitive in this document points here. Check the official page before you rely on a date, a rule or an opening day.

Canton Fair official site — exhibition dates and phase information

https://www.cantonfair.org.cn/en-US

Canton Fair official site — buyer registration and badge information

https://www.cantonfair.org.cn/en-US/pages/buyer

Canton Fair official venue address (published in the site footer)

https://www.cantonfair.org.cn/en-US

Fair dates were last confirmed against the official 141st session notice on 17 November 2026. Venue address and site links were checked on 18 November 2026. The supplier questions in section 06 were reworded on 19 November 2026 so that no company type is described as always able — or always unable — to change a mould or a certification.

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About this document

This checklist is published by ChinaSourcing as a free buyer resource. It is written for first-time international buyers and assumes no prior experience of Chinese trade fairs.

HOW THIS WAS RESEARCHED

Every date, address and rule in this document is tied to a source listed on the previous page. Where something changes often, the text tells you to confirm it rather than presenting it as fixed. We do not claim to have visited the fair or the market for this document: it is built from official published information and the questions buyers ask most often.

It is not an official Canton Fair document and is not affiliated with the organiser. It is general preparation information, not immigration, customs, tax or legal advice. Verify every date, fee and rule on the official site before you commit money.

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Find It. Source It. Ship It.