

Canton Fair buyer's pack: plan the visit, ask the right questions, compare like for like

Written by our team in Guangzhou for UK and overseas buyers going to the 140th Canton Fair (15 October – 4 November 2026). Print it, take it to the booths, and come home with quotes you can actually compare.

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1. Choose the right phase

Each phase shows different products, and the halls change between phases. Buyers with a mixed list often need two phases, or one trip plus remote cover for the other.

	Dates	Main product areas
Phase 1	15–19 October 2026	Electronics, household appliances, lighting, machinery and industrial equipment, hardware and tools, new energy, vehicles and parts
Phase 2	23–27 October 2026	Daily consumer goods, kitchenware and tableware, gifts, home decoration, furniture and building materials
Phase 3	31 October – 4 November 2026	Textiles and garments, shoes, bags, office and school supplies, toys, health and personal care, food and medical products

Selected product areas, not the complete exhibitor plan. Check your exact category against the official exhibitor search before you book travel.

2. Before you go

4–6 weeks before

- ☐ Write one product brief: use, dimensions, materials, finish, quantity per order, packaging, destination market and how you will accept the goods. Give the same version to every exhibitor.
- ☐ Work out your target landed price in the UK, not just the factory price, so you know which booth prices are worth following up.
- ☐ Use the official exhibitor search to build a shortlist, then ask each exhibitor to confirm its phase, booth number and the exact products it will show.
- ☐ Check each shortlisted company's legal name on the Chinese company register before you meet it.

2 weeks before

- ☐ Register as a buyer on the official Canton Fair site and follow its current badge instructions; bring the passport you registered with.
- ☐ Check entry and visa rules for your nationality on GOV.UK foreign travel advice (or your own government's equivalent).
- ☐ Book meetings with your top exhibitors for a specific day and time; booths are busiest on the first two days of each phase.
- ☐ List the UK rules your product must meet (for example UKCA or CE marking, labelling, test standards), so you can ask for the right reports.

Each fair day

- ☐ Walk your booked booths first, then the rest of your halls.
- ☐ Fill in one line of the stand-notes sheet per booth before you leave it; memories blur after twenty booths.
- ☐ Photograph each sample with its model number and the booth number in the same picture (ask first).
- ☐ In the evening, rank the day's booths and email the top three your brief while they still remember you.

3. What to bring

- ☐ Printed copies of your one-page brief, with drawings or photos
- ☐ Business cards (bilingual cards help)
- ☐ This pack and the stand-notes sheet, printed
- ☐ A tape measure and a small torch for checking finish and seams
- ☐ A phone with an offline translation app and a power bank
- ☐ Your target price and quantities, kept to yourself until you have heard theirs
- ☐ A list of the test reports and markings your product needs in the UK

4. Twenty questions for every booth

Ask the same questions at every booth and write the answers down. A quote you cannot compare is not worth much.

Who you are dealing with

1. What is your company's legal name, as it appears on your business licence?
2. Do you make this product yourselves, or does another factory make it?
3. Where is the factory, and can we visit or arrange an audit?
4. Which other UK or European customers buy this model?

Price and terms

5. What is the price, in which currency, and on what basis (EXW, FOB and which port)?
6. How long is this price valid?
7. What are the payment terms, and which company receives the payment?
8. What does the price exclude: moulds, printing plates, packaging, testing?

Quantities and samples

9. What is the minimum order per product, per colour or size, and for printed packaging?
10. What does a sample cost, how long does it take, and is the cost refunded on an order?
11. What changes between this display sample and a production order?
12. How long from sample approval to goods ready to ship?

Customising and shipping

17. Can you add our logo, colours and packaging, and what is the minimum for each?
18. What is the carton size, weight and units per carton?
19. Have you shipped to the UK before, and who handled export customs?
20. Who is our contact after the fair, and by which channel (email, WeChat, WhatsApp)?

Compliance and quality

13. Which test reports do you have for this exact model, to which standard, from which laboratory?
14. Can you supply the documents the UK needs for this product (for example a declaration of conformity)?
15. How do you check quality during production, and will you accept an independent inspection before the balance payment?
16. What happens if goods fail inspection?

5. Stand-notes sheet

One line per booth. Print several copies, one for each day.

Booth	Company (legal name)	Product / model	Price, currency, basis	MOQ	Lead time	Sample cost	Reports seen	Photo no.	Score 1-5

6. Red flags

No legal name

The booth gives only a brand or an English trading name and will not tell you the name on its business licence.

A price far below the other booths

When one quote is much lower for what looks like the same product, the material, the thickness, the packaging or the price basis is usually different. Compare line by line.

Payment to a different company

If you are asked to pay a company or a personal account whose name differs from the legal name you met, stop and check before paying anything.

A trading company presented as a factory

Trading companies can be fine, but they should say so. If the answer to "where is the factory?" keeps changing, assume you are not talking to the maker.

Reports for a different model

A test report only covers the model and standard it names. A certificate for a sister product, or a self-printed CE mark, is not evidence for yours.

Pressure to decide at the booth

"This price is only for today" is a sales line. A good supplier will still quote you next week.

7. After the fair: the first two weeks

1. **Send the same brief to your shortlist**

Ask your top three to five booths to quote against the same written brief, so the answers line up.

2. **Compare landed prices, not booth prices**

Add freight, duty, import VAT and delivery to each quote before you compare. A cheaper booth price can be the more expensive delivered order.

3. **Check the company**

Confirm the legal name, registration and scope on the Chinese company register, and that it matches the company you will pay.

4. **Order samples with written acceptance points**

Agree in writing which features the sample must prove before you pay for it.

5. **Audit before the first order**

For a new supplier and a meaningful order, a factory audit confirms the factory exists, makes what it says, and has the capacity.

6. **Inspect before the balance payment**

Have goods checked against the approved sample before you release the final payment.

8. **UK checks before you place the order**

- Find the commodity code and duty rate for your product. [Import duty calculator](#)
- Work out the full UK import tax, including import VAT. [UK import tax calculator](#)
- Check which markings, standards and documents apply to your product. [UK compliance finder](#)
- Check the labels and importer details the product must carry. [UK product label checklist](#)
- Check whether an anti-dumping duty applies to your product from China. [Anti-dumping duty checker](#)
- Check a Chinese supplier's registration before paying. [Chinese supplier ID checker](#)

Can't go, or can't cover every phase?

Our own staff in Guangzhou walk all three phases for buyers who cannot travel: an exhibitor shortlist checked against the company register, booth visits with photos and video, prices and MOQs collected in the same format, live video calls from the booth, samples shipped to you and a written comparison.

camchinabridge.co.uk/canton-fair · enquiries@camchinabridge.co.uk