

OUTDOOR & GARDEN

PRODUCT SOURCING

BUYER'S CHECKLIST

OUTDOOR & GARDEN SOURCING

The Buyer's Sourcing Checklist

Six gates to run against any factory before you release a purchase order — the same checks our engineers apply on every OGPSGroup program.

60+

VETTED FACTORIES

AQL 2.5

MAJOR / 4.0 MINOR

98%

ON-TIME DELIVERY

THE SIX GATES

- | | | | |
|-----------|--------------------------|-----------|--------------------|
| 01 | Freeze the specification | 02 | Vet the supplier |
| 03 | Approve the sample | 04 | Police the line |
| 05 | Prove the packaging | 06 | Load for the ocean |

Print it. Run it against your current suppliers.

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The six gates at a glance

Most sourcing losses are decided before the first container is booked.

Each gate below is a checkpoint, not a formality. Run them in order: a weak gate early makes every later gate more expensive. The checklist pages that follow give you the specific items to confirm at each one.

Gate	What it decides	The cost of skipping it
01 Specification	What the product actually is, per component.	Vague specs get built the cheaper way.
02 Supplier	Who makes it, and whether they can at your peak.	Capacity collapses in your busiest month.
03 Sample	That the approved unit can be reproduced.	A golden sample nobody can repeat.
04 Line QC	That defects are caught before packing.	Rejections, recalls, chargebacks.
05 Packaging	That the product survives the journey.	Damage claims and a 6,000-mile return.
06 Loading	That the container is filled and braced.	You pay freight on air.

HOW TO USE THIS

Print the checklist pages, hand them to your sourcing or QA lead, and treat every unticked box as an open risk until it is closed in writing. Where a factory refuses to provide a document, that refusal is itself the finding.

Most quality failures are decided before a supplier is ever chosen.

- ☐ Material grade named per component — e.g. 304 stainless on burners, not the word "stainless".
- ☐ Thickness tolerance written as a number, e.g. 0.02 mm either side, not "standard".
- ☐ Width and flatness limits stated so the coil feeds the press without jamming.
- ☐ Surface finish and coating system defined, e.g. #4 brushed finish, powder-coat specification.
- ☐ Rust-prevention method specified before loading, not after the steel arrives.
- ☐ Original mill test certificate / heat number required with the purchase order.
- ☐ A single frozen revision controls the order — no verbal changes on the floor.

WHY THIS GATE EXISTS

If the specification can be read two ways, it will be built the cheaper way. Locking the numbers down front loads the cost of quality into the quote instead of into your warranty reserve.

Red flags: specs that say "high quality", tolerances only in a drawing nobody signs, no mill certificate, verbal changes after tooling.

An assembly-line tour does not tell you who actually makes your parts.

- ☐ Factory audit completed against your specification — not a sales presentation.
- ☐ Certifications verified in the issuing body's own database (ISO 9001, BSCI, IATF where relevant).
- ☐ Capacity checked against your peak month, not your yearly average.
- ☐ Sub-tier and raw-material sources identified and, where it matters, audited too.
- ☐ Named account manager and a named escalation contact recorded in writing.
- ☐ Reference customers contacted without the supplier in the room.
- ☐ No outstanding product-liability or recall history in the last 24 months.

WHY THIS GATE EXISTS

The factory that presents best is not always the factory that produces best. Auditing the sub-tier is what separates a real manufacturer from a trading desk with a showroom.

Red flags: audit only on presentation day, certificates never checked at source, single sub-tier with no backup, references never called.

A golden sample nobody can reproduce is not an approval.

- ☐ Golden sample signed, dated and retained by both sides.
- ☐ Production-intent bill of materials confirmed — valve, regulator, manifold, hose, fasteners.
- ☐ Tooling and moulds tagged to your account; NNN agreement signed before any CAD is released.
- ☐ First-article inspection report issued for every critical dimension.
- ☐ Pre-lab checklist run before any certification submission — do not use the lab as your diagnostician.
- ☐ Change control agreed: any component swap after freeze triggers re-approval and re-testing.

WHY THIS GATE EXISTS

Sampling is not the moment to check the product; it is the moment to check whether the factory can repeat the product. Freeze the build and the paperwork together or neither is binding.

Red flags: sample approved verbally, no retained golden unit, component substitutions "to save cost", no change-control clause.

Final inspection alone finds defects too late to be cheap.

Defect class	AQL	Rule of thumb
Critical — safety, gas leak, structural	0.0	One failure rejects the whole sample.
Major — function or compliance	2.5	At a 2,000-unit lot: inspect 125, accept 7, reject 8.
Minor — cosmetic finish	4.0	Same 125-unit sample: accept 10, reject 11.

- ☐ Written defect library with photo examples agreed before mass production starts.
- ☐ In-line checkpoints at roughly 25%, 50% and 75%, plus a pre-shipment inspection.
- ☐ Calibrated tools on the floor: torque wrench, leak detector, calipers — not eyes and hands.
- ☐ Line-stop authority written into the agreement, not negotiated case by case.
- ☐ A Corrective Action Plan required for every rejected lot, with a re-inspection.

WHY THIS GATE EXISTS

A defect found on the line costs a repair. The same defect found in a customer's backyard costs a replacement, a return, a review and the margin on the next order.

Red flags: no written defect library, factory self-inspection only, uncalibrated tools, no re-test after a corrective action.

Packaging is the cheapest lever on damage claims — and the most often skipped.

- ☐ ISTA 3A drop and vibration testing passed on the packed, ready-to-ship unit.
- ☐ Top-load and stack height verified against how the container will actually be stacked.
- ☐ Corner and edge protection specified — moulded EPP blocks, V-board, not loose foam.
- ☐ Dimensional weight reviewed; flat-pack where it lowers landed cost without raising damage.
- ☐ Carton marking and packing list match the load plan, so nothing is unpacked to be counted.

WHY THIS GATE EXISTS

You do not ship a product, you ship a pack. A unit that survives the factory but not the crossing is a unit that failed, whatever the AQL report said.

Red flags: standard cartons on a heavy item, no drop test, foam chosen by eye, no repair parts in the first container.

The last five per cent of cost is won or lost in the load plan.

- ☐ Load plan drawn before the container is booked — not improvised at the dock.
- ☐ Multiple SKUs mixed to fill the cube, not just the container floor.
- ☐ Damage-prone items braced; moisture control specified (desiccant or VCI film).
- ☐ Photos of the loaded container taken before the doors close.
- ☐ Damage rate tracked per shipment so the next load plan improves on the last.

WHY THIS GATE EXISTS

Freight is sold by volume but bought by discipline. A good load plan is the only line item in the container that costs nothing and saves the most.

Red flags: loading decided on the day, no bracing, no moisture control, no photos, no per-shipment damage record.

Compliance quick reference

Name the market before you name the product.

Every market adds its own gate before the product can legally ship. Put these on the specification sheet, not on the packing list.

Market	Ask your supplier for
United States	ANSI Z21.58 / CSA 1.6 for gas grills; CPSC compliance; FCC authorisation for connected appliances.
Canada	CSA certification to the applicable gas-appliance standard.
European Union	CE marking, LFGB food-contact evidence, PPWR packaging compliance.
United Kingdom	UKCA marking to the equivalent gas-appliance standard.
Australia	AGA compliance for outdoor gas appliances.

ONE TRAP WORTH NAMING

A pre-certified radio module does not make a certified product. Host integration — antenna placement, thermal shielding, enclosure — still has to pass on the finished unit.

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NEXT STEP

Run these six gates and most surprises disappear.

If you would rather have a partner run them with you, we audit the factory, freeze the specification, sit the inspection and load the container. Tell us your category, market and annual volume and we will map where your risk actually sits.

Talk to a sourcing specialist

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