

WORLDFIRST

The ultimate guide
to sourcing on **1688**
as an international buyer



Introduction

If you're looking to source products from China, you have likely come across 1688.com. The platform is China's leading online B2B marketplace for businesses dealing with wholesale orders and sourcing. 1688.com caters to businesses of all sizes, including those looking to open eCommerce stores and is a cost-effective option when considering wholesale marketplaces.

WorldFirst, an international payments expert, has put together a comprehensive guide for 1688.com buyers - from product sourcing, supplier communication, international shipping to making easy cross-border supplier payments.

In this guide:

- 1 Background of 1688.com
- 2 Why source from 1688.com
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- 5 Communication
- 6 Payment
- 7 Shipping
- 8 How WorldFirst can help



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Background of 1688.com

As a subsidiary of Alibaba Group, 1688.com launched in 1999 with an initial focus on connecting local manufacturers, factories and wholesalers with local buyers.



When comparing prices on other B2B platforms, the products on 1688.com could be anywhere from 4% to 15%* lower, a substantial saving for small-to-medium sized businesses. Part of its appeal, also, comes from the ability to make small orders of as little as two pieces. As more merchants discover the benefits of purchasing from 1688.com, early adopters and those who are able to leverage the platform will gain an advantage over their competitors.

120M
registered users

10M
suppliers

35M+
monthly web visits

1,700
sub-categories

16
industries

Including raw materials, industrial products, apparel, household goods, small commodities, electronics and food & beverage

136
countries/regions

where account registrations are allowed

*Note: Price may differ according to product type, campaign promotion and market factors.

Types of sellers

Wholesalers



Wholesalers make up the bulk of shops on 1688.com. The majority have a minimum order quantity of only a few pieces, as well as a minimum spend amount. As a rule, wholesalers hold more inventory and stock than factories.

Brand owners



Brand owners are similar to wholesalers in that they offer a low minimum order quantity. However, while wholesalers will often sell white label goods, branded stores on 1688.com will operate a storefront with their brand name and logo.

Factories & manufacturers



Factories specialise in receiving production orders, with the minimum order quantity (MOQ) starting at 1,000 pieces in some cases. There is a 'Find a Factory' option in the 1688 app, which buyers can use to filter for factories in different categories. Generally, factories do not keep inventory but make products based on orders.

Sourcing agents or virtual factories



Similar to a middleman, these merchants help buyers find a reliable supplier, negotiate the best price, assist with documentation, coordinate with the factory or perhaps oversee the production to ensure it aligns with specifications. As sourcing agents, they don't hold stock; rather, they help to secure products within the promised lead time.



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Why source from
1688.com?

There are several reasons [1688.com](https://www.1688.com) offers buyers an advantage over other wholesale sourcing platforms in China.



Low, transparent prices

As the majority of suppliers on 1688.com are factories and wholesalers, customers are able to bypass export agents or trade companies who add on a service fee or margin. On other platforms, these factories often rely on trading companies to reach a global audience; on 1688.com, they have an online presence and listed contact details, allowing buyers to purchase goods directly at a lower price. Furthermore, strong competition and tiered pricing means prices are lower and the more units you purchase, the cheaper the per unit price.

Variety of products

As the largest local wholesaling platform in China with dozens of categories listed, 1688.com allows buyers countless options when it comes to products and suppliers. The majority of factories in China are listed on 1688.com, which gives buyers a variety of choices, compared to attending a trade show or expo.

Low min. order quantity

Unlike other wholesale websites with high minimum order quantities, many sellers allow buyers to purchase one or two pieces. This benefits small businesses who may not yet have the budget for large orders to purchase a wider range of products, while it allows more established businesses to evaluate the quality before committing to a large order.

High quality sellers

Suppliers on 1688.com are required to have a Chinese business licence, with details listed on their store page, including the company's date of incorporation, registered capital and company address. Buyers also have the option of procuring from 1688.com's cross-border site, [global.1688.com](https://www.global.1688.com), which exclusively promotes reliable suppliers selling trending products in the global marketplace.

Keep in mind: 1688.com was originally developed as a platform for local Chinese suppliers to reach local buyers. As such, the website is listed in Chinese with no English support. Furthermore, the majority of the factories and suppliers won't have English speaking employees to assist with requests from overseas. There are tools to assist with the language barrier, Google Translate and Google Lens among them.

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How to get started

Opening an account

All users must register for an account on 1688.com in order to begin purchasing. There are two ways to open a 1688.com account:

- **Via Taobao on mobile:** To register for an account on a mobile device, you will need to register via Taobao. Both Taobao and 1688 accounts may share the same details as they are both subsidiaries of Alibaba Group. If you already have a Taobao account, you can use those details to log into 1688.com.
- **Via 1688.com on PC:** To register via the website, visit www.1688.com and click on the 免费注册 tab, which means 'Sign up for free'.



Top tip: If you can't read Chinese, use Google Translate to convert the page into English. Make sure you're using Chrome as your browser, right click and select 'Translate into English'.



- A pop-up will appear for a user agreement. Please select to register as an **individual**. (Again, use Google Translate to change the text into English if necessary.)



Important: Registering for a company account on 1688.com is meant for domestic suppliers and sellers only. Foreign companies or non-local individuals are required to register as an **individual**, even if doing so on behalf of a company.

3. HOW TO GET STARTED

1688 账户注册

企业账户注册 | 个人账户注册

无企业营业执照的个人用户请注册个人账户。权益如下：做个人实名认证；作为买家身份采购；

Username * 会员名: 设置会员名

Password * 登录密码: 设置你的登录密码

Confirm password * 密码确认: 请再次输入你的登录密码

Mobile no. * 手机号码: 新加坡 +65

Slide button right * 验证码: >> 拖动到最右边

了解更多:
会员名如何设置会更好?
会员账户注册不成功?
个人账户可以开店吗?
注册个人账户需要准备什么资料?
一个人能注册多个会员账户吗?
其它问题

创建网站账号的同时，我同意遵守：
《阿里巴巴服务条款》及《隐私声明》

同意并注册

- Fill in your information on the registration page and click 同意并注册, which means 'Agree and register'.

验证手机

验证码已发送到你的手机，15分钟内输入有效，请勿泄露

手机号码:

* 验证码: 请输入验证码 重发(52 s)

请输入您的手机收到的验证码

提交

- You will receive a one-time password at the mobile number indicated for verification. Enter the code and submit by clicking 提交.

To activate your 1688 account, tick the check box to accept the agreement and click 'Confirm'

- Completing your profile (optional): 1688.com will request that you complete your account profile on the following page.



Verifying your account

After registering for your 1688 account, you will need to use an Alipay personal account to verify your 1688 account opening.



How to open a personal Alipay account

On Mobile:

1. Open Alipay mobile app (iOS and Android) and click 'Register'
2. Select your country code and add your mobile number
3. Enter the verification code sent to your mobile number.

On Desktop:

1. Log into www.alipay.com and select 'Register'
2. Next, click 'Personal Account' and select 'Nationality/ Region'
3. Fill in your mobile number and enter the verification code sent to your mobile number.

While this is not mandatory, a verified 1688 account is necessary if you would like to:

- Connect to 1688 Cross-border Pay (跨境宝) to make payments
- To restore your account in the event it is frozen or restricted



What is the 1688 Cross-Border Pay or 跨境宝?

This payment solution is the official cross-border payment method jointly launched by Ant Group and 1688.com. It allows foreign companies to pay suppliers on the platform securely to avoid your account from being frozen. 1688 Cross-border Pay (跨境宝) has no annual limit transfers which makes it easy for foreign buyers to make large purchases.



1A. Receive funds from third parties or marketplaces



1B. Add funds from your bank account

How it works

WORLDFIRST

1688

2. Connect your 1688 account with World Account

3. Make automated payment* deduction when you purchase from 1688

*Sufficient CNH balance in your World Account is required to make automated payment with 1688 Cross-border Pay



Verifying your identity

For 1688 accounts opened by individuals based outside of China, the verification process requires you to connect with a verified personal Alipay account.

- Click on your account name and navigate to 账户管理 (account management)
- Under 我的认证 (my verification), go to 我要认证 under 个人认证 (verify using personal details)



- You will be redirected to the quick verification page. Enter your Alipay login ID and password, then click the orange button 'link to Alipay account'
- You are now verified and your Alipay account is connected to your 1688.com account

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Product sourcing

How to source goods

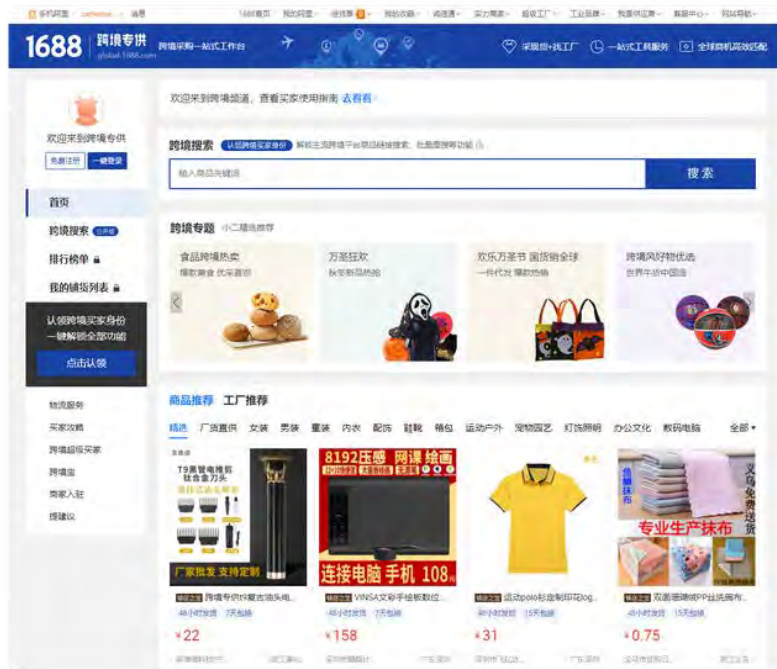
With 16 industries represented on 1688.com and over 1,700 sub-categories, there's no lack of products to search for. Top categories include fashion, accessories, sports equipment, home decoration, office supplies, automobile supplies food & beverage and raw materials.

The platform offers a convenient tool where buyers can upload an image of the product to return search results.



Global 1688.com

eCommerce sellers may want to consider the cross-border version of 1688.com. The global site is targeted towards international trade and as such, filters suppliers who are willing to distribute overseas, can offer low MOQs and list trending goods.



Using a sourcing agent

There are several ways to source on 1688.com as a foreigner. For those with little cross-border business experience or who are overwhelmed by the language barrier, sourcing agents can assist with language translations, timely delivery of your products and quality control. Agents generally charge a commission between 1 - 3%.

Sourcing Agent

Leeline Sourcing - With over ten years' experience in exporting, Leeline Sourcing offers quality service to assist with product inspections, factory audits, shipping and Amazon FBA.

If you feel confident in sourcing yourself, you'll need to take care of selecting a supplier, communication and payments on your own.



Selecting a supplier

Visit the [1688 website](#). Once you have searched for your product, you can filter the search results by:

- Categories (商品分类)
- Cross-border capabilities (跨境特色) which includes international certification and patent certification

Other options include:

- MOQ: Enter your preferred MOQ in the field 起订量以下
- Time: Dispatch within 24 hours (tick checkbox 24小时发货; not available for cross-border delivery)
- Trustworthiness: This option is only available to suppliers who have achieved a certain standard in quality and timely delivery (tick checkbox 实力商家)
- Price
- Manufacturing time: Enter the maximum number of days in the field next to 上架时间
- Location (所在地区): This allows you to filter by proximity to your logistics provider, potentially saving on shipping costs and time



Top tip: Don't forget to use Google Translate if necessary. You can also translate into other languages by clicking on the Google Translate icon on the right of the address bar and clicking on the three dots to select a different language.

As with all of Alibaba Group's brands, trust is an integral part of the platform. On a supplier's shop page, you can see how many years they have been operating on 1688.com their response rate, return rate, other customers' rating and whether they offer buyer protection. You can also access a cumulative history of transactions from the last 90 days compared to the industry average. This will allow you to benchmark their service and capabilities against their competitors.





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Communication



Communication with suppliers is one of the most important but sometimes most difficult aspects of product purchasing. A sourcing agent can help with translations and requests; without one, you have to rely on digital tools and your own abilities.

You can communicate directly with factories and wholesalers, via the details listed on their shop profile. The majority will provide options for chatting via WeChat as well as Aliwangwang, the official chat tool on 1688.com.

Most suppliers have a limited understanding of English or other languages, so it's important to keep communication simple, professional and concise.

Some questions to ask include:

- ✓ Can products be sent outside of China or are they for domestic sale only?
- ✓ What is the return policy?
- ✓ What is the delivery timeframe?
- ✓ What is the inventory and/or manufacturing timeframe?
- ✓ Product certifications (if your product requires these)

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Payment

The most cost-effective and secure way to pay cross-border suppliers is by using the 1688 Cross-border Pay solution, which allows international buyers to make 1688 payments through World Account provided by WorldFirst. Compared to bank transfers, payments can be faster and cheaper.

1688 sourcing solution with seamless payment method



Easy & Seamless

Smooth procurement on 1688.com and seamless payment integration with World Account



Pay securely

World Account authorise your payments directly to your suppliers on 1688.com



No annual limits

No threshold limits for yearly foreign exchange payments



Lower your costs

Competitive exchange rate for conversions to RMB



Steps for an APAC buyer paying into 1688.com

1. Open a (personal) account with [1688.com](https://www.1688.com)
2. Register for a [World Account](#) by WorldFirst
3. After successfully registering with WorldFirst, open a CNH currency account within seconds
4. Top up or convert to CNH funds in your World Account
5. Authorise World Account to link your payments to 1688.com via [Cross-border Pay*](#) (KJB/ 跨境宝)


*This payment solution is available to international buyers in Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam, Indonesia, Hong Kong, Australia, New Zealand.



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Shipping

As shipping costs can vary widely depending on the delivery method, it is one of the most important aspects to consider when making a purchase. Below are the four most common methods of delivery from China to Asia.

	ePacket	Air express	Sea freight	Special line
				
Description	China's express postal service	International air carriers such as DHL, FedEx, UPS	Buyers purchase full containers or partial containers to travel by boat	Chartered flights and distribution channels along popular routes
Best for	Small, lightweight packages of low value	Urgent deliveries, items of value	Heavy or bulky shipments	Products destined for Amazon FBA warehouses, items of value
Cost	Low	High	Low	Medium
Delivery time	Regular	Fastest	Slow	Fast



Have you considered a freight-forwarding partner?

Freight forwarders are intermediaries specialising in cross-border shipping. They take the headache out of getting your cargo from the factory to your warehouse with services that include preparation of documentation, insurance, customs clearance and storage options. They can also advise on the best shipping method for your cargo. WorldFirst has partnered with [Lucky Lucky](#) (an Amazon certified service provider) to offer members a special price as Amazon sellers.



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How WorldFirst
can help

WorldFirst is an international payments provider specialising in global remittance services for online sellers and SMEs. As part of Ant Group since 2019, we share a purpose 'to make it easy to do business anywhere' by offering inclusive and affordable services to small and medium-sized businesses and online merchants trading globally.

A World Account allows you to convert multiple currencies to pay 1688 suppliers using 1688 Cross-border Pay solution. It is seamless, fast and secure. For more information, reach our WorldFirst team for assistance.

Collect. Convert. Pay. Manage.



Collect international payments from global marketplaces



Convert money at a time and rate that suits you




Pay in multiple currencies from a single account



Manage your money and FX transactions all in one place

Contact the WorldFirst Southeast Asia Team

 +65 6805 4370

 worldaccountsea@worldfirst.com

Detailed guide: bit.ly/1688-step-by-step

 worldfirst.com/

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