FORM TO FACTORY

Beginner’s Guide to Finding a Clothing Manufacturer

A practical starting point for fashion designers and clothing brands moving from concept to production.

FREE DOWNLOAD • GETTING STARTED

Welcome

Finding a manufacturer is not simply about locating a factory. It is about identifying a potential production partner whose capabilities, minimum quantities, communication and quality expectations match your product and budget. This guide helps you prepare for that search.

1. Get your product ready to explain

Before contacting manufacturers, create a clear product brief. You do not need a perfect collection, but you should be able to describe what you want made.

• Product category and garment type (for example, woven dresses or knit T-shirts).

• Sketches or reference photos, plus any important design details.

• Fabric preference, trims, sizing range and approximate quantity per style.

• Desired launch date, target quality and an initial budget range.

Quick exercise: Write one sentence describing your product, its customer and the number of units you hope to produce.

2. Understand common manufacturing terms

• **MOQ (minimum order quantity):** the smallest order a factory accepts, sometimes per style, colour or size.

• **Sample:** a trial garment used to check fit, construction and finishing before bulk production.

• **Tech pack:** specifications describing measurements, materials, construction and details.

• **Lead time:** the time needed for sampling or production, subject to approvals and material availability.

• **Unit price:** the quoted cost per item; confirm what it includes and excludes.

3. Where to research potential manufacturers

Explore trade fairs, industry directories, professional networks, referrals and manufacturer websites. Search for factories experienced in your particular garment type, rather than choosing solely by country or price. Form to Factory considers international sourcing possibilities across the UK, Europe, Africa and Asia.

Create a shortlist of three to five potential suppliers. Treat listings and claims as starting points, not proof of capability.

4. What to ask in your first enquiry

• Do you manufacture this garment category and have relevant examples?

• What is your MOQ per design, colour and size?

• Do you offer sampling, pattern development or fabric sourcing?

• What information is required for a quotation?

• What are typical sample and production lead times?

• What payment terms, quality checks and shipping arrangements apply?

5. Compare quotations carefully

Ask each supplier to quote against the same specifications and quantities. A lower unit price may exclude fabric, labels, packaging, sampling, inspection, freight, duties or taxes. Compare the full estimated landed cost, not only the factory price.

6. Verify before committing

• Request business details, production examples and references where possible.

• Arrange a video call or independent inspection when appropriate.

• Review sample quality, measurements and finishing before approving bulk production.

• Put specifications, payment milestones, timelines, tolerances and remedies in writing.

• Avoid sending a large payment without appropriate due diligence and safeguards.

7. Your simple sourcing action plan

Action	Your notes
Define product and quantities	_____
Prepare specifications	_____
Research 3–5 suppliers	_____
Request comparable quotations	_____
Order and review samples	_____
Agree written production terms	_____

A final reminder

Start small, ask clear questions and allow time for sampling and revisions. A promising manufacturer is not automatically the right manufacturer for your business. Verify independently before placing an order.

Ready for the next step? Explore the paid Fashion Manufacturer Sourcing Toolkit and Fashion Production Planner & Costing Workbook on formtofactory.com for more detailed worksheets and planning tools.

This guide is general educational information, not a guarantee of supplier performance, pricing or production outcomes.