Factory Audit Checklist for Gym Equipment Suppliers

Commercial Fitness · Buyer's reference · A4 printable

A supplier's website tells you what the company wants you to believe. A factory audit tells you what is actually there. For a container-scale order of commercial gym equipment, the audit is the single highest-value hour you can spend, because it is the only point at which you can still change the specification, the supplier, or the terms before money and cargo are committed.

This guide is written for gym operators, dealers, and procurement teams sourcing from China who need a checklist they can use on a factory floor or in a live video call. It focuses on commercial equipment: machines that must survive daily use in a public facility, where a specification substitution is not a cosmetic problem but a warranty liability.

> **Printable checklist — free PDF.** This guide is also available as a 5-page A4 reference you can take to a factory or share with your team. Download the factory audit checklist PDF → (includes every checklist table and the source references).

Key Takeaways

- **An audit verifies claims, not brochures.** The goal is to confirm that the company owns or controls production, that quality records exist, and that the model quoted is the model built — not to be shown a showroom.
- **Certificates should be matched to models.** ISO 9001 covers a management system; CE marking and EN ISO 20957 test reports relate to specific products. Ask for both and check the model numbers.
- **A live video audit works if it is unscripted.** Insist on seeing raw materials, welding, coating, assembly, and finished goods, and ask for a random carton to be opened during the call.
- **Third-party inspection is cheap relative to the order.** A pre-shipment inspection at roughly 0.5–1.5% of order value can catch a substitution before the container is sealed, when the leverage is still on your side.
- **The biggest risk is a trading company presented as a factory.** Ask for the business licence, the factory address, and a walkthrough that crosses between production zones without a change of location.

What an Audit Is For — and What It Is Not

An audit is not a tour. A tour is arranged in advance, follows a clean route, and ends in a showroom. An audit tests specific claims: that the supplier manufactures rather than resells, that the production line is operating, that records exist, and that the quoted specification is the one that leaves the line.

For a first order, the audit answers four commercial questions:

Question	What passes	What fails
Do they make the machines?	Own production floor, welding and coating equipment, staff on the line	A showroom and an office, with production "at a partner factory"
Can they make *your* specification?	Material certificates, drawings, a sample built to your spec	Verbal assurance that the spec is "standard"
Will quality hold at volume?	In-process inspection records, test equipment, a documented QC process	Finished-goods photos only, no records between raw material and shipping
Can they ship to your market?	Prior export documentation, market-specific certificates, references	No experience with your destination and no broker relationship

The distinction between a manufacturer and a trading company matters because it determines who controls the specification, who honours the warranty, and whether a spare part exists in year four. Our guide to finding reliable suppliers → covers the sourcing channels; the audit is what happens after you have a shortlist.

Before the Audit: Documents to Request

An effective audit starts before you travel or open a video call. Request these documents in advance and read them; a supplier that will not send basic documents will not welcome questions on the floor either.

Document	What it proves	What to check
Business licence	Legal identity and registration date	Name matches the entity on the quotation; older registration is generally safer
Factory address and site photos	That a production site exists at the stated location	Street-level consistency across photos, licence, and video
ISO 9001 certificate	A documented quality management system	Certificate is current and covers the relevant scope and site
Product test reports	That specific models were tested	Model numbers match the machines you are quoted, not a different catalogue
CE / UKCA documentation	EU/UK market conformity	Declaration of Conformity names the model and the applicable standards
Material certificates	Steel grade and coating specification	Grade and thickness match the quoted specification
Export references	Experience with your region	Shipment records to your country, not merely a list of client logos

For EU and UK buyers, one date is worth planning around: Regulation (EU) 2023/1230 replaces the Machinery Directive 2006/42/EC from 20 January 2027, and allows digital declarations of conformity and instructions for use under defined conditions. A supplier who already works to EN ISO 20957 and can issue model-specific documentation will transition more cleanly than one whose compliance is a single generic CE logo. Ask what their documentation will look like after that date — it is a useful test of how closely they follow regulation.

On the Floor: The Physical Checklist

The factory floor is where a claim becomes evidence. Work through these zones in order; the sequence matters because it follows the material from raw state to shipped product.

1. Raw material and storage

- Steel stock: is the specified gauge actually on site? For commercial frames, 3 mm structural steel is the reference point; a factory quoting 3 mm but storing mostly 1.5–2 mm material is a signal to investigate.
- Material traceability: can a batch of steel be linked to a certificate and a production order?
- Motor and component storage: are AC continuous-duty motors present for cardio lines, or is the floor dominated by intermittent-duty DC motors destined for home equipment?

2. Welding and fabrication

- Weld quality: look for consistent beads, no visible porosity, and jigs that hold geometry repeatably. A factory that relies on hand-measuring every frame will not hold a specification across a container.
- Equipment condition: automated or semi-automated welding and CNC machining are good indicators of consistency; a single worn machine suggests capacity limits.
- Work in progress: is there evidence of the model you are buying, or only a display unit?

3. Powder coating and finish

- Pre-treatment: is there a cleaning and conversion stage before coating, or is powder applied directly?

- Curing: an oven with recorded temperature and time. A "properly cured powder coat" is the difference between a ten-year frame and a two-year one, and the oven is where that difference is made.
- Finish consistency: compare a finished frame with the sample you approved. Colour matching should use the RAL system if your order includes a custom colour.

4. Assembly and quality control

- Assembly line: are machines built in sequence with documented steps, or assembled ad hoc?
- In-process inspection: ask to see records from the current week, not a folder of older reports. Look for who signed them and what happens when a unit fails.
- Functional testing: does each machine get run before packing? For cardio equipment, ask how long the duty test runs.
- Test equipment: calibrated torque tools, load testing rigs, and electrical safety test gear should be visible and in use.

5. Finished goods and packing

- Random carton: ask them to open one that is already packed. This is the unscripted moment that reveals whether the packed product matches the approved sample.
- Spare parts: confirm the parts kit you negotiated is physically present and can be packed into the same container. Our spare parts availability guide → explains why that kit matters more than most warranty language.
- Marking and documentation: model labels, serial numbers, and the paperwork that will accompany your shipment.

Running the Audit by Video

A live video audit is not a compromise if it is run properly. The rules are simple and should be agreed before the call.

Rule	Why it matters
Live only, with a requested route	Pre-recorded footage can be edited; a live walkthrough cannot hide a missing production zone
Ask for unscripted items	"Open a random carton" and "show me this week's QC record" test reality, not a rehearsal
Keep one continuous camera	Moving between zones on the same call confirms the sites are co-located
Record the call	You will miss details live; the recording becomes part of your supplier file
Follow up in writing	Send a short list of confirmations and ask for answers against your spec

A video audit is also the right format for a second supplier you are comparing against the first. The cost is an hour, and the comparison is often decisive. How the two suppliers handle the same awkward request tells you more than a month of email.

The Third-Party Inspection Layer

A factory audit verifies capability before the order. A pre-shipment inspection verifies that the specific order matches the specification before the container is sealed. They are different controls and you need both on a first container-order.

An independent inspection is commonly priced at roughly 0.5–1.5% of order value, with a fixed minimum per visit. The inspector checks quantity, specification, workmanship, function, packing, and documentation against your approved sample and contract. The report is your evidence if a shipment later fails to match what was agreed.

Book the inspection for a date when the goods are finished but before packing is sealed. If the inspection finds a substitution, your leverage is still high: the supplier can correct it before the goods ship. After clearance, the same problem becomes a claim, a delay, and a lost opening window. The international warranty and shipping damage guide → covers what happens when evidence is gathered too late.

Red Flags: When to Walk Away

Some signals are minor; others end the conversation. Treat the following as disqualifying, particularly in combination.

Red flag	Why it is serious
No access to the production floor	You cannot verify the central claim — that they manufacture
Business licence name does not match the quotation	You may be dealing with an intermediary using a borrowed identity
Price materially below comparable quotes	The difference is usually recovered by substituting steel gauge, motor duty, or components
Certificates cannot be matched to quoted models	The certificate describes a different product or only a management system
No sample policy	The supplier is not used to approving specifications before production
Pressure to pay a large deposit before any verification	It removes the leverage that keeps the audit meaningful

Walking away early is cheap. The wholesale gym equipment page → sets out the order terms we work to, including samples credited against the first order — a term that is itself a useful test of whether a supplier expects to be audited.

From Audit to Contract

An audit is only useful if its findings become contract terms. Convert every verified claim into a line the supplier signs:

- **Specification** — steel gauge, motor duty rating, powder-coat process, and the exact model numbers, attached to the quotation.
- **Inspection rights** — your right to a pre-shipment inspection and to a re-inspection if the first one fails.
- **Payment linkage** — final payment tied to a passed inspection, not merely to a shipping date. A common structure is a deposit with the order and the balance against the inspection report, and our import guide → explains how that structure interacts with shipping terms.
- **Spare parts** — the agreed parts kit listed as a line item, not a verbal promise.
- **After-sales response** — how a claim is made, who honours it, and what response time is committed. Compare the terms against the commercial warranty guide → before signing.
- **OEM/ODM scope** — if your brand is involved, what is customisable and what stays with the manufacturer. The OEM guide → sets out that boundary.

For buyers still deciding whether to source direct or through a distributor, the factory-direct versus distributor comparison → sets out the cases where a distributor is genuinely the better answer. An audit is a cost either way, but it pays back most clearly when you are about to commit a container.

Sources and Verification

The regulatory and cost figures in this guide reference public sources, current as of November 2026:

- Regulation (EU) 2023/1230 on machinery — EUR-Lex, official EU law summary. Repeals Directive 2006/42/EC from 20 January 2027. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/EN/legal-content/summary/machinery-safety-requirements.html
- ISO 20957-1:2024, fixed training equipment, general safety requirements — ISO. https://www.iso.org/standard/81908.html
- Pre-shipment inspection cost range — industry practice as reported by sourcing guides; treat as a planning range, not a quote.
- EN ISO 20957 and CE marking obligations apply to the specific machine placed on the EU/UK market, not to a company's management-system certificate alone.

Rates, standards, and fees change. Confirm the current requirement with your own broker, notified body, or testing laboratory before it becomes a contract term.

---

ntaifitness.com → · Read the live guide → · https://www.ntaifitness.com/guides/pdf/factory-audit-checklist-gym-equipment.pdf