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SOURCING

How to Buy iPhones Wholesale: A Verified Buyer's Step-by-Step Guide

If you run a phone repair shop, regional retail chain, or refurb operation and you need to source iPhones at wholesale prices, the legitimate path runs through three or four specific channels. This is the working playbook.

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KEY TAKEAWAYS

secondary B2B market.

- Four legitimate channels: authorised distributors (CDW, Ingram Micro, etc.) for new sealed; carrier surplus / insurance pools for new sealed and Grade A; refurbishers for Grade A/B/C; B2B trading platforms for everything else.
- Expect to need a registered business, a resale tax certificate, and minimum order commitments (\$25k-\$100k per lot is typical).
- Verification before payment: 100% GSMA clean, sample iCloud-lock check, region-spec match (US-spec A2xxx, EU-spec A3xxx, HK-spec A31xx).
- Escrow or letter of credit for first deals with any new supplier. T/T 100% advance only with established counterparties.

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Is there an Apple wholesale programme for small businesses?

No. Apple does not sell directly to wholesale buyers below a very high revenue threshold. Apple's direct B2B programmes (Apple Business, Apple Authorised Enterprise Reseller) are designed for end-user enterprise purchases, not for resale or wholesale distribution. To resell iPhones at scale, you source through one of four legitimate secondary channels.

Channel 1: Authorised distributors

Companies like CDW, Ingram Micro, Tech Data (now TD SYNEX), and regional equivalents are Apple-authorized distributors that sell new sealed iPhones to qualified B2B buyers. Pricing is closer to MSRP than the secondary market (10-20% below MSRP typical) but you're getting brand-new, fully-warrantied, region-correct stock.

Requirements:

- Registered business with tax ID (EIN, VAT number, or equivalent)
- Apple-approved reseller status (varies by distributor; some require Apple's separate authorisation)
- Resale tax certificate so the distributor doesn't charge you sales tax
- Minimum order: typically \$25k-\$100k per PO depending on distributor and territory

Best for: established retailers, regional electronics chains, and corporate IT resellers serving institutional buyers.



Channel 2: Carrier surplus and insurance return pools

Major carriers (Verizon, AT&T, T-Mobile, EE, Vodafone, etc.) accumulate three streams of iPhone stock that flows out via authorised liquidation partners: phones returned under trade-in promotions, phones replaced under insurance claims (the damaged original becomes carrier property), and surplus from over-forecasting demand. Liquidation partners (Assurant / Hyla Mobile, Likewise, Recommerce) sell this stock at scale to qualified B2B buyers.

This channel produces the bulk of [Grade A](#) and [Grade B iPhone wholesale](#) stock globally. Pricing is 30-55% below MSRP depending on grade, age, and lock status.

Requirements:

- Established B2B relationship; first-time buyers usually start through a refurbisher intermediary
- Minimum quarterly volume commitments (often \$250k+ per quarter)
- Acceptance of mixed-grade lots with disclosed grade ratios

Channel 3: Refurbishers

smaller B2B buyers. This is where most mid-sized wholesale buyers source. Pricing is 5-15% above carrier-surplus pricing but the grading is pre-verified and the inventory is consistent.

Refurbisher tiers:

GRADE	COSMETIC	FUNCTIONAL	TYPICAL DISCOUNT VS MSRP
A+ / Mint	Like new, no visible wear	100%, battery ≥90%	25-35%
A	Minimal micro-scratches only	100%, battery ≥85%	35-45%
B	Visible scratches, no cracks	100%, battery ≥80%	45-60%
C	Significant wear, chips/dents	100%, battery ≥75%	60-75%
14-Day	Returned under carrier 14-day window	100%, near-new battery	25-35%

Channel 4: B2B trading platforms

For lots smaller than refurbishers will quote (typically under 100 units), or for specific model/region combinations that aren't in refurbisher inventory, B2B trading platforms aggregate offers from many sellers in one place. [Aikon](#), [gsmExchange](#), [Tradeloop](#), [Eze](#), [Handsetmesh](#) all run different versions of this. Pricing is comparable to refurbishers; the win is selection.

Most active wholesale iPhone buyers use 2-3 platforms in parallel. Each platform's seller pool overlaps maybe 20%, so being on multiple gives you broader visibility into available inventory.

Wholesale iPhone prices move daily and vary by region, lock status, and volume. As of May 2026, these are working ballpark ranges for unlocked **Grade B**, US-spec stock at single-lot volumes (50-200 units). See our [market data page](#) for the methodology.

MODEL	STORAGE	WHOLESALE GRADE B (UNLOCKED, US)
iPhone 17 Pro Max	256GB	\$980-\$1,120
iPhone 17 Pro	256GB	\$810-\$930
iPhone 16 Pro Max	256GB	\$790-\$910
iPhone 16 Pro	256GB	\$640-\$740
iPhone 15 Pro Max	256GB	\$620-\$730
iPhone 15 Pro	256GB	\$510-\$600
iPhone 14 Pro Max	128GB	\$440-\$520
iPhone 13 Pro	128GB	\$330-\$400
iPhone 12	64GB	\$170-\$220
iPhone 11	64GB	\$120-\$165

Carrier-locked stock trades 5-15% below these. EU-spec and HK-spec trade 3-7% above (premium for dual-SIM physical configurations). Storage bumps from 128GB to 256GB to 512GB add 8%, 15%, and 22% respectively on Pro models.

What contracts should you have in place?

escrow or letter-of-credit payment terms. Don't accept T/T 100% advance with someone you've never traded with.

- **Purchase order** defining: model + storage + colour, region spec (e.g. "US A3104"), grade (referenced to a published [grading rubric](#)), quantity, **MOQ** price, total, Incoterm (FOB / CIF / DAP, etc.), lead time.
- **IMEI manifest** as text-format CSV (not Excel, which destroys leading zeros). One IMEI per row, with grade and any defect notes.
- **Payment terms**: T/T 30/70 (30% deposit, 70% against **PSI**) for established suppliers. Escrow or L/C for first-deal counterparties.
- **PSI clause**: third-party Pre-Shipment Inspection by SGS / Bureau Veritas / Intertek (or specialist electronics inspectors) for lots over \$50k. Cost runs \$250-\$1,500 per inspection.
- **GSMA clean warranty**: see our [GSMA clean status guide](#) for the standard escrow clause language.



What verification steps before paying for a lot?

1. Run the manifest through our free [bulk IMEI check tool](#) for format + Luhn validation. Anything failing is either a typo, Excel-mangled, or fabricated.
2. Run 100% GSMA blacklist screening through [CheckMEND](#) or equivalent. Any non-clean status triggers the dispute clause.
3. Spot-check a 10-20% sample on iCloud [Activation Lock](#) (for iPhones) and physical region-spec match (the model number on the back of the device or in Settings > About).
4. Release escrow / send wire / confirm payment.

Frequently asked questions

Can I buy iPhones wholesale without a business?

Practically no. Authorised distributors and most refurbishers require a registered business and tax ID. The only path for individuals is the consumer secondary market (Swappa, eBay, Backflip) at near-retail prices, not true wholesale.

What's the minimum I can buy at wholesale prices?

Through B2B trading platforms, lots from 5-25 units. Through refurbishers, typically 50-100 units minimum. Through authorised distributors, the order minimum is usually \$25k-\$100k. Below those thresholds, the price gap to retail closes quickly.

How do I avoid counterfeit iPhones in wholesale?

Counterfeit risk is low if you source through authorised distributors, refurbishers, or verified B2B platforms. Risk rises sharply for stock sourced through unverified WhatsApp brokers or unknown overseas suppliers. Always verify via Apple GSX (or sample serial-number check), require original packaging where possible, and demand IMEI manifest with PSI verification.

SIM-free means the device was sold without a carrier SIM but may still be carrier-locked through firmware. Unlocked means the device will accept any carrier's SIM. In wholesale, the terminology is often misused. Always require the seller to specify carrier-lock status explicitly: "factory unlocked" (never carrier-attached) or "carrier unlocked" (was locked, has been unlocked).

How long does a typical wholesale iPhone deal take to close?

From first contact to delivery: 1-2 weeks for established counterparty repeat business; 3-6 weeks for first-time deals with PSI and escrow setup. Cash-flow planning should assume the longer end for new suppliers.

Trade on the structured layer

Aikon is free for verified companies. Post buy and sell offers, browse a live feed of vetted counterparties, and connect across iOS, Android and the web.



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