

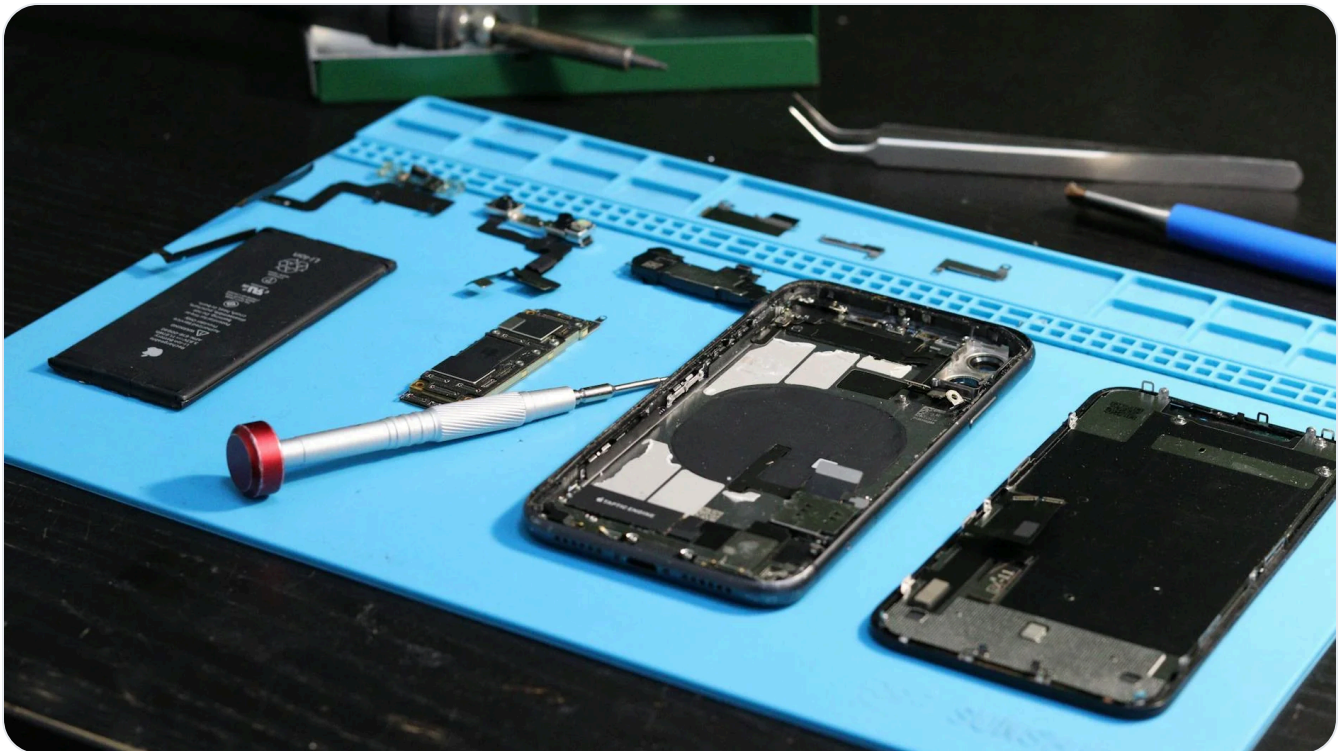
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How to grade used smartphones for wholesale: A, B, C, and 14-day explained

Grade A on one trader's spec sheet is Grade B on another's. This is the working rubric used across the wholesale electronics trade in 2026, with cosmetic and functional definitions, the four common dispute patterns, and how to pre-empt them at the PO stage.

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KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Grade A in 2026 trade usage typically means light micro-scratches on screen and frame, no chips, no LCD marks, fully functional, and battery health above 85 percent.
- Grade B allows visible scratches, minor dents on the frame, no glass cracks. Functionality must be 100 percent.
- Grade C allows cosmetic damage including chips, dents and heavy scratches. Functionality must still be 100 percent unless explicitly sold as "working with faults."
- 14-day phones are returned-but-unused stock from carriers. They are typically the highest-grade used product in the trade after CPO.
- Battery health, MDM lock status, and original-vs-aftermarket parts are the three biggest sources of post-shipment disputes.

IN THIS GUIDE

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Why does grading matter more than price in wholesale used phones?

Two traders quote you the same SKU at the same price. One delivers stock that meets your retail partner's definition of **Grade A**; one delivers stock your partner classes as **Grade B** and discounts by 18 percent. The difference in margin on a

TERMS USED IN THIS GUIDE

Grade A

Grade B

MDM

Grade C

CPO

IMEI

That is why grading discipline is the single biggest leverage point in the used phone trade. The price negotiation is the visible part. The grading clause in the PO is where money is actually made or lost.

What does Grade A mean in 2026 wholesale practice?

Across the major refurbishers and trading desks, the working definition of [Grade A](#) used has converged on the following:

- **Cosmetic:** Minor micro-scratches visible only at an angle. No chips, no dents, no cracks. Original glass and original housing. No LCD discoloration, dead pixels, burn-in, or shadows.
- **Functional:** All buttons, ports, speakers, microphones, cameras (front and rear), face ID or Touch ID, and wireless charging fully operational. No water damage indicators triggered.
- **Battery:** Health above 85 percent for iPhone (verified via Settings > Battery > Battery Health). For Android, equivalent state-of-health measured by diagnostic tool.
- **Lock status:** No iCloud lock, no Google FRP lock, no [MDM](#) enrollment, no carrier lock unless explicitly sold as locked.
- **Box and accessories:** Typically not included unless specified as "in original box."

The variance comes at the edges. Some sellers grade phones with screen protectors as Grade A and only inspect underneath if challenged. Some treat 80 percent battery health as Grade A; some demand 90. **Confirm the exact thresholds before you agree the price.**

Grade B

Visible scratches, minor frame dents and edge wear are acceptable. The screen must be free of cracks. Functionality must remain at 100 percent. Battery health threshold is typically 80 percent.

Grade B is the bulk-volume tier in the secondary market. It is what feeds most low-cost retail channels in emerging markets and most insurance-replacement programmes in developed markets.

Grade C

Significant cosmetic damage allowed: deep scratches, dents, chips, scuff on the back glass. Screen cracks are typically a separate sub-grade (**Grade C+**) unless explicitly excluded. Functionality must be 100 percent unless sold as "working with faults." Battery health typically 75 percent floor.

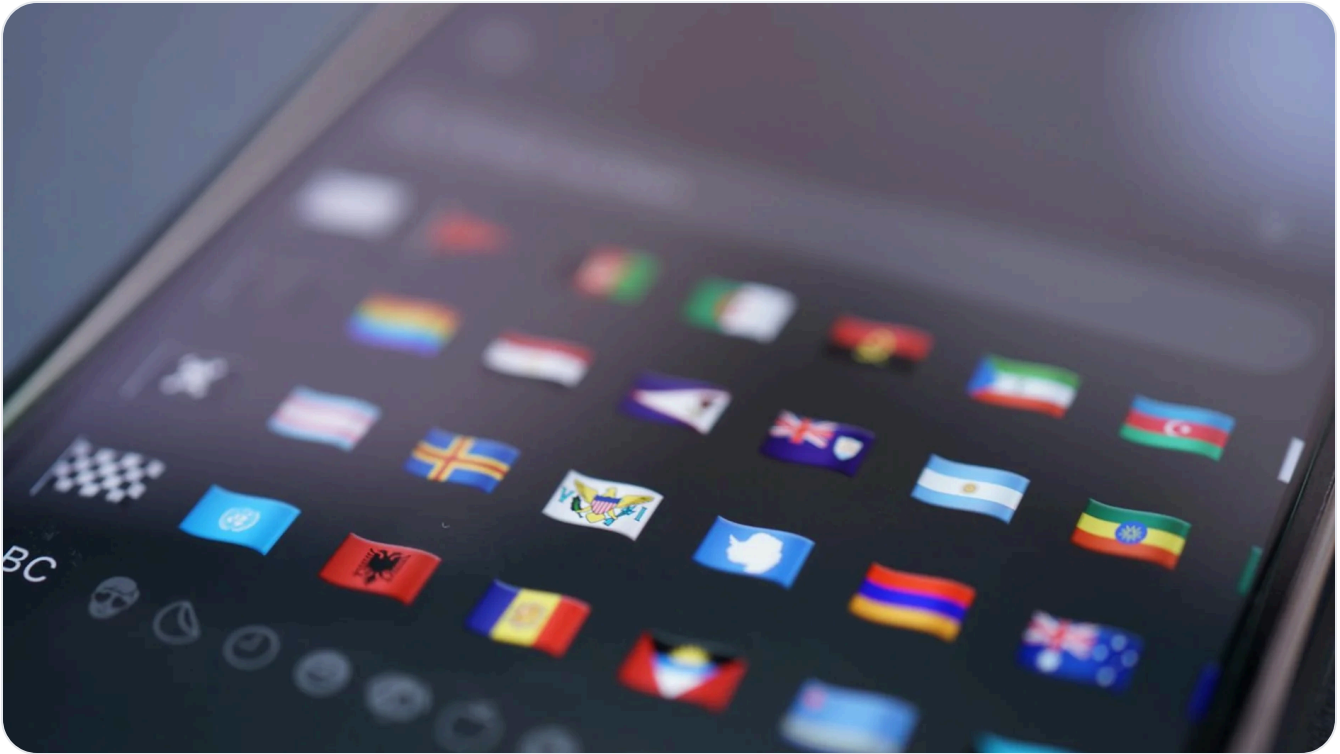
Grade C is the volume tier for refurbishers who will replace housings and screens and re-grade the resulting unit upward. The economics work when housing replacement costs are below the grade-A-vs-grade-C price spread.

Beyond C

Anything below Grade C is normally sold as "parts only," "BER" (beyond economic repair), or "mixed with faults." In the trade these lots are priced by chassis count, not by working unit.

The 14-day grade

14-day stock is phones returned to carriers within the statutory return window in the UK and similar markets, before activation or after limited activation. They are physically near-new, sometimes still in box. In trader spec sheets, "14-day" is typically priced above **Grade A** and below **CPO** (Certified Pre-Owned). The



Which grading rubric holds up at delivery?

GRADE	COSMETIC	FUNCTIONAL	BATTERY HEALTH (IPHONE)	TYPICAL PRICE VS GRADE
14-day	Near new	100%	100%	+8% to +12%
CPO	Refurbished cosmetic	100%	>90%	+5% to +10%
Grade A	Micro-scratches only	100%	>85%	baseline
Grade B	Visible scratches, minor dents, no cracks	100%	>80%	-12% to -20%

Grade C	Heavy wear, chips, no cracks	100%	>75%	-25% to -40%
C+ / cracked	Cracked screen acceptable	100% or stated faults	>70%	-45% to -65%
BER / parts	Any condition	Not guaranteed	n/a	chassis-priced

What are the four most common grading disputes?

- Battery health.** Buyer expects >85 percent across the lot; receives a distribution where 12 percent of units fall between 80 and 85. The fix: write the spec as "100 percent of units >85 percent battery health, verified at Settings > Battery > Battery Health (iOS)." Specify what happens if any unit fails: replacement, credit, or pro-rata refund.
- Aftermarket parts.** A unit grades A on cosmetic and function but has a non-original screen or back glass. For Apple devices, iOS now flags non-genuine displays in Settings > General > About. The fix: write the spec to require "original Apple parts only, verified via Settings." Some traders accept aftermarket parts at a discount; just price it explicitly.
- MDM enrollment.** The phone passes [IMEI](#) and iCloud checks but is locked to a corporate MDM (Mobile Device Management) profile that activates on first setup. The fix: require sellers to confirm MDM-free status via DEP / Apple Business Manager check, or accept a defined return rate for MDM-locked units.
- Inconsistent intra-lot grading.** The seller's "[Grade A](#)" lot contains a 6 percent tail of units that look like [Grade B](#). The fix: agree a tolerance threshold up front (commonly 3 to 5 percent) and a remediation mechanism for any tail beyond that.



How do you write a grading clause that holds?

The PO grading clause is short, specific and references measurable thresholds. A working template:

Grade A specification (sample clause):

All units shall be classified as Grade A subject to: (1) cosmetic, micro-scratches only, no chips, dents or cracks; (2) functional, 100 percent functional including all sensors, buttons, ports, cameras, biometrics and wireless charging; (3) battery health greater than 85 percent for iPhone, equivalent state-of-health for Android; (4) original manufacturer parts verified via device diagnostic; (5) free of iCloud, Google FRP, carrier and **MDM** locks; (6) intra-lot tolerance of 3 percent; deviations beyond tolerance to be replaced or pro-rata credited.

How do verified counterparties on Aikon handle grading?

threshold, lock status and origin region as structured fields. A buyer filtering the feed sees only offers that match their grade and battery thresholds.

That structure does not eliminate disputes, disputes happen when units arrive, but it eliminates the most common pre-shipment misalignment, which is two traders thinking they agreed on [Grade A](#) and meaning two different things.

What changes for traders who grade tightly?

Tighter grading lowers the average price the trader can sell at, but it also lowers dispute volume, lowers return rates from downstream retail customers, and protects the trader's reputation in a market where reputation determines who answers your WhatsApp messages. The traders who close the most repeat business in 2026 are not the cheapest sellers; they are the ones whose grading is identical lot after lot.

Frequently asked questions

What is the difference between Grade A and CPO?

Grade A used phones have minor cosmetic wear and are sold without manufacturer certification. CPO (Certified Pre-Owned) phones have been refurbished by the manufacturer or a certified facility, typically with new battery, new screen if needed, and a manufacturer warranty. CPO is priced 5 to 10 percent above Grade A in 2026 wholesale.

Is there an industry standard for used phone grading?

There is no enforced global standard. R2v3, RIOS and ADISA cover refurbisher process certification but do not standardize cosmetic grades. The result: every trader and refurbisher publishes their own rubric. Always request the seller's spec sheet before agreeing on price.

The 2026 working norm in wholesale is greater than 85 percent battery health, verified via the iPhone's Settings menu. Some buyers demand greater than 90 percent, especially for resale into Western European retail. Always specify the exact threshold in writing.

What is a 14-day phone?

A 14-day phone is a handset returned to a carrier within the statutory return window (typically 14 days in the UK). The unit has been in customer hands very briefly, often unactivated. 14-day stock is priced above Grade A and is widely traded out of the UK into other markets.

How do I check if a used iPhone has aftermarket parts?

On iOS 15 and later, go to Settings > General > About. iOS will flag non-genuine displays, batteries and cameras with a notice. For batteries, check Settings > Battery > Battery Health for the "Important Battery Message" that appears with non-original batteries.

What does MDM-locked mean and how do I avoid it?

MDM (Mobile Device Management) is a corporate enrollment that locks a phone to an organisation's management server. The phone looks normal until first setup, when it requires the original organisation's credentials. To avoid MDM-locked stock, require the seller to confirm DEP (Device Enrollment Program) status via Apple Business Manager before purchase.

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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