

THE APPAREL STARTUP KIT

Everything you need to launch your clothing brand

A comprehensive guide covering:

- Understanding fabric weights and GSM
- Choosing the right quality tier
- MOQ planning and budgeting
- Common mistakes to avoid
- Production timeline expectations
- Branding and customization options

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1. Understanding Fabric Basics

Before you start manufacturing, you need to understand what your garments are made of. The fabric you choose affects how your product looks, feels, lasts, and ultimately how your customers perceive your brand.

Cotton Types

Regular Cotton — The most common and affordable option. Good for budget-tier products and test runs.

Combed Cotton — Cotton fibers are combed to remove short fibers and impurities, resulting in a softer, stronger fabric. Ideal for mid-tier products.

Compact Cotton — Premium cotton with tighter fiber structure. Produces a smoother surface perfect for high-end printing and embroidery.

Ring-Spun Cotton — Spun to create a finer, softer yarn. Popular for premium t-shirts.

Cotton Blends

Cotton/Polyester (e.g., 70/30 or 80/20) — Blending cotton with polyester adds durability, reduces shrinkage, and lowers cost. The trade-off is slightly less breathability. Common ratios include 70% cotton / 30% polyester for budget products.

Fabric Construction

Jersey — Lightweight knit fabric, typically used for t-shirts. Soft and stretchy.

French Terry — Has loops on the inside (like a towel) and smooth outside. Lighter than fleece, great for year-round wear.

Fleece — Brushed on both sides for maximum warmth. Standard for hoodies and sweatshirts.

Pro Tip: Request fabric swatches before committing to a large order. The feel of a fabric can't be judged from specifications alone.

2. GSM Guide: What Weight Do You Need?

GSM (Grams per Square Meter) measures fabric weight. Higher GSM means heavier, thicker fabric. Understanding GSM helps you choose the right weight for your product and positioning.

T-Shirt GSM Ranges

GSM Range	Feel	Best For	Price Point
140-160	Very light, thin	Promotional items, events	Budget
180-200	Light, everyday	Summer tees, basics	Budget-Mid
210-240	Medium, quality feel	Retail brands, streetwear	Mid
240-260+	Heavy, premium	Luxury positioning	Premium

Hoodie & Sweatshirt GSM Ranges

GSM Range	Feel	Best For	Price Point
280-300	Light fleece	Test drops, summer	Budget
320-350	Medium, retail quality	Year-round, scaling brands	Mid
380-420+	Heavy, luxury	Premium streetwear, winter	Premium

Pro Tip: If you're unsure, start with mid-range GSM (210-240 for tees, 320-350 for hoodies). It's the sweet spot between quality perception and cost.

3. Quality Tiers Explained

Not every brand needs premium everything. Understanding quality tiers helps you match your product to your brand positioning and budget.

Tier 1 — Budget (Validation Tier)

Best for: Test drops, influencer samples, market validation, events

- Cotton/Poly blend (70/30)
- Single needle stitching
- Screen print branding
- Normal wash (no enzyme treatment)
- $\pm 5\%$ size tolerance
- MOQ: ~100 pieces per color

Tier 2 — Core (Best Seller)

Best for: Retail-ready brands, e-commerce, scaling businesses

- 100% combed cotton
- Double stitching + reinforced seams
- Puff print, HD print, or embroidery options
- Enzyme + silicon wash (pre-shrunk, soft feel)
- $\pm 3\%$ size tolerance
- MOQ: ~200 pieces per color

Tier 3 — Premium (Selective)

Best for: Luxury brands, premium retail, limited editions

- Custom knit cotton or compact cotton
- Flatlock or coverstitch construction
- Embroidery only + custom trims
- Full finishing (enzyme + silicon + bio polish)
- $\pm 2\%$ size tolerance
- MOQ: ~500 pieces per style

Pro Tip: Many successful brands start with Tier 1 for validation, then upgrade to Tier 2 once they've proven demand. Don't over-invest before you know your market.

4. MOQ Planning & Budgeting

MOQ (Minimum Order Quantity) is often the biggest hurdle for new brands. Here's how to plan around it strategically.

Understanding MOQ

MOQ exists because factories need to set up machinery, source materials, and allocate labor. Smaller orders have higher per-unit costs because setup costs are spread across fewer pieces.

Typical MOQ Ranges

Tier	MOQ	Approximate Cost/Unit*
Tier 1 (Budget)	100 pcs/color	\$8-15 (tees), \$18-28 (hoodies)
Tier 2 (Core)	200 pcs/color	\$12-20 (tees), \$25-40 (hoodies)
Tier 3 (Premium)	500 pcs/style	\$18-30 (tees), \$40-65 (hoodies)

*Costs vary based on customizations, location, and current material prices.

Budget Planning Formula

Use this formula to estimate your initial investment:

Total Cost = (Unit Cost × Quantity) + Shipping + Customs + Samples

Example Budget (100 Tier 2 Hoodies):

- Units: $100 \times \$32 = \$3,200$
- Shipping: ~\$400-800 (varies by location)
- Customs/Duties: ~\$200-400 (varies by country)
- Samples: Free (you pay shipping only)

Total: ~\$3,800-4,400

Pro Tip: Always add a 10-15% buffer for unexpected costs. It's better to be over-prepared than scrambling for funds mid-production.

5. Production Timeline

Understanding realistic timelines helps you plan launches, marketing, and inventory management. Here's what to expect from order to delivery.

Typical Production Phases

Phase	Duration	What Happens
Sample Approval	1-2 weeks	Review and approve production samples
Material Sourcing	1-2 weeks	Factory orders fabric and trims
Production	1-3 weeks	Cutting, sewing, printing, finishing
Quality Control	2-3 days	Inspection and packaging
Shipping	1-4 weeks	Sea (4 weeks) or Air (1 week)

Production Time by Tier (Loomry)

- **Tier 1:** 2-3 weeks (simpler construction, standard finishes)
- **Tier 2:** 3-4 weeks (additional finishing, quality checks)
- **Tier 3:** 5-6 weeks (custom materials, premium finishing)

Pro Tip: Plan your launch date backwards from shipping. If you want to launch December 1st and shipping takes 3 weeks, production must complete by November 10th at the latest.

6. Branding & Customization

Your branding touches are what transform a blank garment into YOUR product. Here are the customization options available at each tier.

Print Methods

Screen Printing — Classic, durable, cost-effective for larger runs. Best for bold designs with limited colors.

DTG (Direct-to-Garment) — Digital printing for complex, multi-color designs. Better for smaller runs.

Puff Print — Raised, 3D texture. Popular for streetwear brands.

HD Print — High-definition, smooth finish. Great for detailed graphics.

Embroidery — Premium feel, durable. Best for logos and small designs.

Labels & Tags

Woven Neck Labels — Standard branded label sewn into the neck.

Printed Neck Labels — Tagless option, printed directly on fabric.

Hang Tags — External tags attached with string or plastic. Great for storytelling.

Size Labels — Can be printed or woven, placed at hem or side seam.

Hardware & Trims

- Custom zipper pulls (for full-zip hoodies)
- Custom drawstring aglets
- Custom buttons or snaps
- Custom packaging (poly bags, tissue paper, boxes)

Pro Tip: Your neck label is the first thing a customer sees when they pick up your garment. Invest in quality labels — they're inexpensive but make a huge impression.

7. Common Mistakes to Avoid

Learn from others' expensive lessons. Here are the most common mistakes new clothing brands make — and how to avoid them.

1. Ordering Too Much Inventory

New brands often order thousands of units before validating demand. Start with MOQ or slightly above. It's better to sell out and reorder than sit on unsold inventory.

2. Skipping Samples

Never approve production without physically seeing and wearing a sample. Photos and specs can't capture fit, fabric feel, or construction quality.

3. Ignoring Size Grading

Your size chart must be accurate and consistent. Poor sizing leads to returns, bad reviews, and lost customers. Request a size spec sheet and verify it matches your target fit.

4. Underestimating Shipping Costs

International shipping and customs can add 15-25% to your total cost. Get shipping quotes BEFORE finalizing your budget.

5. Choosing the Wrong Tier

Premium tier for a brand selling \$25 tees doesn't make sense. Budget tier for a luxury brand damages credibility. Match your tier to your price point and positioning.

6. Poor Communication

Manufacturing is a partnership. Be clear about expectations, ask questions, and respond promptly. Miscommunication causes delays and errors.

7. No Quality Control Process

Establish acceptance criteria upfront. What defect rate is acceptable? Who inspects before shipping? Document everything in writing.

8. Your Launch Checklist

Use this checklist to ensure you're ready for your first production run.

Before Ordering

- Defined your target customer and price point
- Selected appropriate quality tier
- Finalized designs and artwork (print-ready files)
- Created size chart based on target fit
- Budgeted for units + shipping + customs + buffer
- Requested and reviewed fabric swatches

Sample Phase

- Ordered production samples
- Tested fit across multiple sizes
- Verified print/embroidery quality
- Checked all labels and tags
- Documented any required changes
- Approved final sample in writing

Production Phase

- Confirmed production timeline
- Arranged shipping and customs clearance
- Set up inventory management system
- Prepared product photography
- Built/updated website and product pages
- Planned launch marketing

Ready to Start?

At Loomry, we help emerging brands navigate manufacturing with flexible MOQs, transparent pricing, and personalized support. Request a free sample and see the quality for yourself.

Get started at loomry.org

Email: hello@loomry.org

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