

What Should an Indian Proforma Invoice Show?



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An Indian proforma invoice is the supplier's written offer, and it is usually what you pay a deposit against. Before paying, check that it carries the legal name exactly as on the GST record, the GSTIN and an export code that is the same PAN, your full spec and quantity, an HS code, an Incoterm with a named place, payment terms tied to events, and a bank account in that same legal name. An export invoice should not normally add Indian GST, so a tax line is a question to ask.

The Short Version

- The legal name on the proforma, the GST record and the bank account should be identical.
- The export code (IEC) is the same PAN as characters 3 to 12 of the GSTIN, so you can check both from one number.
- An Incoterm without a named place is unfinished. Fix the place and the Incoterms edition on the proforma.
- Exports are zero-rated under India's GST law, so a GST line on an export proforma deserves a question.
- Confirm the bank details by phone on a number you already had, before the first payment and after any change.

It should show who you're paying, what you're buying and on what terms, in a form you can check before money moves. That means the supplier's legal name exactly as on its GST record, its GSTIN and an export code that matches, your product spec and quantity, an HS code, an Incoterm with a named place, payment terms tied to events, and a bank account in that same legal name. If any one of those is missing or doesn't match, ask before you pay the deposit.

An Indian forum voice gave the short version in 2025 - "Ask supplier for PI first, cross check their gst number and then make a bank transfer" ([r/IndiaBusiness, 2025](#)). That's the right order. In our review of forum threads, the cheapest checks buyers use are the GSTIN, the export code and a legal-name match between the GST record, the proforma and the bank account. Below is what to look for line by line, with one made-up proforma marked up. The caveat - a proforma is a commercial document, not one India's law prescribes field by field, so this is a buyer's checklist, not a legal format.

SourcingFrom Intelligence

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- 01 **Export of goods is a zero-rated supply under India's GST law**, so a GST charge on a proforma to a buyer abroad is a question, not a cost. (*IGST Act s.16(1)(a)*)
- 02 **The name match is the check forum voices skip**. Buyers ask for a GSTIN and treat it as "at least registered". Matching it to the bank account name is what ties your payment to that business. (*Our review of forum threads, 4 independent mentions, 2023 to 2025*)
- 03 **A real exporter has its own reason to want the money in its own account**. Indian exporters reconcile each shipment against the export proceeds received through their bank, and one small exporter described closing every shipping bill with the bank as a cost of each shipment. (*Our review of forum threads, one exporter plus agreeing replies, 2025 · Reported, supplier-side*)

What we don't know yet

- ☐ How often proformas sent to first-time foreign buyers carry a bank account in a different name. Nobody has counted it.

1. Whose Name Should Be on It?

The legal name of the business, exactly as it appears on the GST record. A trade name alongside it is normal, and many Indian firms trade under a brand that differs from the legal name. What you're checking is that one legal person sits behind the GST registration, the export code and the bank account.

So the proforma should carry:

- **Legal name and full address**, the address matching a place of business on the GST record.
- **GSTIN**. Run it through the free [GST taxpayer search](#) and check status and filing history ([what an Indian GST number tells you](#)).
- **IEC**, India's export code. It's the same as the PAN, so characters 3 to 12 of the GSTIN should equal it, and the GST article above shows how to run it through DGFT's [View Any IEC](#).
- **Your details as buyer and consignee**, spelled the way your own customs paperwork will spell them.

If the supplier is a trader shipping through its own export code, the proforma will carry the trader's details, not the factory's. That's normal. If it carries a third company's details, ask who the exporter is and why ([manufacturer vs trading company](#)).

2. What Should It Say About the Goods?

Enough that a stranger could check the shipment against it. Product description to your spec (material, size, finish, colour), quantity and unit, unit price and total, currency, packing and marks, and a reference to the approved sample. A loose description like "cotton bags as discussed" gives you nothing to hold when the goods arrive different.

Add the HS code. Indian exporters use India's 8-digit ITC-HS code, and only the first six digits are shared with your country's tariff, so a mismatch after digit six is normal. Your own tariff code is the one that sets your duty (HS codes). Country of origin belongs here too, and if you plan to claim a free-trade rate, the origin paperwork needs to be agreed now, not after shipping (certificate of origin).

3. Which Terms Need to Be on It?

Three, in writing.

- **Incoterm, edition and named place.** "FOB" alone is unfinished. "FOB Nhava Sheva, Incoterms 2020" is a term. What each term leaves you to pay is on Incoterms.
- **Payment terms tied to events.** The deposit and what it's for, and what triggers the balance, such as a passed inspection and a copy of the bill of lading. How to size a deposit is on why Indian suppliers ask for full advance.
- **Validity and ship date.** How long the price holds and when the goods leave. Write "all-inclusive price to the named place, including export packing" on it as well, which closes the most common route to a later price rise.

4. Should There Be GST on It?

Normally not as a charge to you. Export of goods is zero-rated under India's GST law (IGST Act s.16(1)(a)), and most exporters ship under a Letter of Undertaking without charging it. Some pay the tax and claim it back instead. Either way, a GST line on a proforma addressed to a buyer abroad is a question to ask, not a cost to accept. It can also be a sign the supplier is

used to selling inside India and is new to export paperwork, which is worth knowing before your first order.

5. What Should the Bank Details Show?

A business account in the same legal name as the GST record, at a named bank and branch, with the SWIFT code. Not a personal name, not a different company, and not a "sister concern" without a written explanation from the supplier. There's a sound reason a real exporter wants the money in its own account. Indian exporters reconcile each shipment against the export proceeds received through their bank, and one small exporter described closing every shipping bill with its bank as a real cost of each shipment ([r/StartUpIndia, 2025, Reported](#)).

Before the first payment, confirm the account by phone on a number you already had, not one from the email carrying the proforma. Records prove a business exists. They don't prove the person emailing you works there. If the details change later, stop and follow [what to do when a supplier changes bank details](#).

6. What Does a Checked Proforma Look Like?

Here's a made-up one, for illustration only. It isn't a real document, a template from any supplier or a required format. Every name and number is fictional, and the identifiers use X so they can't match a real business.

Points 1, 3, 4 and 9 are the identity checks and take about five minutes with the free lookups above. Points 5 to 8 are the commercial terms, and they're the ones you'll be glad of if something goes wrong. The full record checks behind points 1 to 4 are on [how to verify Indian suppliers](#).

If you'd like someone to check the supplier and the proforma before you pay, and to release the balance only once inspection passes, [SourcingSync](#) does that for buyers in India.

Questions Buyers Ask

Is a proforma invoice a contract? ^

It's the supplier's offer. Once you accept it in writing or pay against it, it usually becomes the core of the deal, so check it as if it were the contract and add a purchase order that repeats the key terms.

The proforma has no GSTIN. Should I pay? v

Can the bank account be in the owner's personal name? v