

Watch OEM IP Protection Checklist

This practical checklist helps brands reduce design leakage, clarify ownership, and control confidentiality before starting a watch OEM project.[1][2][3]

How to use this checklist

Use this document before NDA signing, before sample approval, and again before mass production begins.[1][4]

- Mark each item as Complete, Pending, or Not Applicable.
- Attach the checklist to internal sourcing reviews or supplier onboarding.
- Recheck the contract section before any tooling payment or final PO approval.[5][6]

Project basics

Item	Status	Notes
Brand / project name is confirmed		
OEM model is defined: OEM, ODM, or Private Label		
Main market(s) for sale are defined		
Internal owner for approvals is assigned		
Launch timeline is documented		

IP assets to identify

Confirm exactly what needs protection before any files are sent to a factory or supplier.[7][8]

IP asset	Confirmed	Notes
Logo / wordmark		
Dial artwork / layout		
Case design / dimensions		
Crown / bezel / caseback details		
Handset design		
Packaging artwork		
Product renders / campaign images		
CAD files / technical drawings		
BOM / component specifications		
Mold or tooling drawings		

NDA and confidentiality controls

A strong NDA should cover not only the factory, but also any subcontractors that may access drawings, molds, samples, or branding files.[2][4][6]

Checkpoint	Complete	Notes
NDA signed before sharing files		
NDA covers drawings, samples, pricing, BOM, and discussions		
NDA includes subcontractors and affiliate factories		
NDA defines confidentiality duration		
Trade secrets are protected on a long-term or perpetual basis		
Portfolio / exhibition / social media use is prohibited without approval		
Sample photography requires written consent		

Ownership and contract terms

Ownership language should be explicit, especially for modified designs, tooling, and engineering files created during development.[2]
[5]

Clause to verify	Complete	Notes
Client-provided IP remains client property		
Ownership of revised engineering drawings is defined		
Mold / tooling ownership is stated clearly		
Conditions for mold transfer or destruction are stated		
Similar-design production restrictions are included		
Breach penalties and remedies are included		
Governing law / dispute resolution is defined		
Exit terms after project cancellation are defined		

File handling and access control

Good factories restrict who can access files and maintain revision control across the project lifecycle.[3][4]

Process control	Complete	Notes
Version numbers are applied to all design files		
Final approved drawing set is labeled clearly		
Factory access is limited to project staff only		
External sharing is logged or approved		
File deletion / archive rules are documented		
Returned samples and obsolete drawings are tracked		

Tooling and sample controls

Molds, sample watches, and prototype parts are often where exclusivity breaks down if ownership and handling are vague.[1][3]

Control point	Complete	Notes
Prototype ownership is defined		
Sample retention or return rules are defined		
Factory cannot display samples without permission		
Molds are tagged to the project / client		
Mold storage location is documented		
Mold destruction certificate is available on request		

Subcontractor and supply chain controls

If production is split across dial, case, strap, or packaging vendors, the same IP rules should flow through the full supply chain.[2][5]

Checkpoint	Complete	Notes
Factory discloses key subcontracted processes		
Subcontractors sign equivalent confidentiality obligations		
Supplier list is controlled or partially visible		
Packaging vendor access is restricted		
Brand files are shared only on a need-to-know basis		

Pre-production approval gate

Before tooling payment or bulk production, confirm that all protected design elements match the approved version.[1][5]

Approval point	Complete	Notes
Final drawing revision approved		
Dial artwork approved		
Caseback branding approved		
Packaging files approved		
Movement / component specs approved		
QC reference sample archived		

Red flags to watch for

These signals often indicate weak IP discipline or poor process control.[1][3][9]

- The factory asks for full design files before signing an NDA.
- The supplier refuses to define mold ownership in writing.
- Sample photos appear in public channels without permission.
- The factory will not explain whether key steps are subcontracted.
- Sales staff promise exclusivity but the contract does not mention it.
- Revised engineering files are created, but ownership is left undefined.

Final sign-off

Use this section before moving to mass production.[5][6]

Final check	Complete	Notes
NDA is signed and stored internally		
Contract IP clauses are reviewed by legal / management		
Ownership of tooling is clear		
Sample display restrictions are confirmed		
Supply chain confidentiality controls are confirmed		
Final approved files are archived internally		

Internal note

This checklist is a practical business tool, not legal advice. For high-value projects, cross-border tooling, or exclusive designs, legal review is recommended before contract signature.[2][6]