CERAMIC BASINS / SOURCING & QUALITY

What is A-Grade?

An Everson buyer brief on ceramic basins

> “A-Grade” is a sales label used for ceramic basins ranging from basic, lower-quality products for budget ranges to high-quality products for premium ranges. **It has no single, shared quality standard across suppliers and markets.** On its own, it is effectively an empty label: it does not tell you which quality level you are being offered.

01

What buyers expect from A-Grade

Some buyers use A-Grade to request the highest quality a supplier offers. Others expect products suitable for their customers. A supplier can confirm “A-Grade” while leaving the requirements behind either expectation undefined.

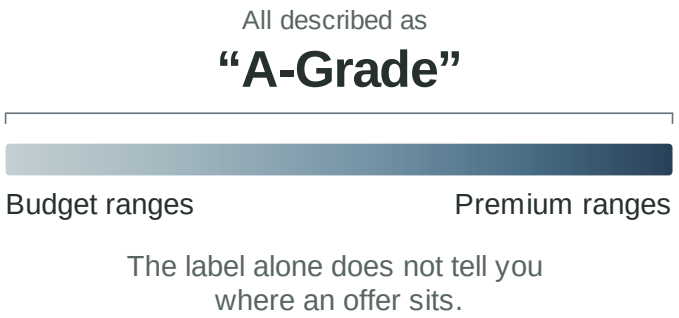
You may already know which products work for your market and what your regular supplier’s A-Grade represents. Your previous or current orders give you something concrete to refer to. However, a new or backup supplier’s A-Grade may cover substantially different quality. The same check is worthwhile when adding another model from your current supplier: **the label does not establish which acceptance requirements carry over.**

> At Everson, we start with your existing quality requirements or market requirements and review them together. This helps us establish how the offer compares with the quality you need, along with any differences to resolve before placing an order.

02

What suppliers mean by A-Grade

“A-Grade” is primarily a sales term. Factories sort finished basins into categories using their own grading rules. All of those categories can be offered under the same A-Grade description, without the quotation identifying which will be supplied.



The quality offered commonly depends on the supplier’s judgment of what you are likely to accept. Your target price and destination market may guide the supplier’s judgment. For repeat purchases, previous orders, agreed samples, and your feedback provide further reference points.

Consider a supplier quoting a lower grade or mixed-grade supply to a price-sensitive buyer and a more selective grade to another buyer. **Both buyers receive “A-Grade” offers from the same supplier, even though the quality differs.**

03

Hidden Costs: When a Cheaper Quote Costs More

You receive two quotations for the same basin design. Both say “A-Grade,” and one is cheaper. The matching “A-Grade” descriptions can make the quality comparison *look* settled. How can you compare the offers confidently when the quality behind each label is still unclear?

Like supplier reliability and support, product quality affects your costs and profit margins.

If the mismatch remains hidden until production or delivery, resolving it can involve substantial additional expense and delays. Those costs can erase the saving you expected. You may also face disagreement over what was promised: both parties agreed to A-Grade, but each understood something different.

Establish how each offer compares with your requirements before treating a lower price as a saving or dismissing a higher-priced offer.

INSPECTION NOTE

The Lowest A-Grade: “No Obvious Defects”

At its lowest, A-Grade can amount to a rough appearance description: **“no noticeable visual defects from about 60 cm - roughly an arm’s length.”**

Some suppliers make the description more specific by setting viewing conditions. Even then, “not obvious” leaves room for judgment, and the check still gives only a broad indication of appearance.

Products meeting that basic appearance description are still sold under the A-Grade sales label. **The description does not establish their factory grade** or settle the requirements for dimensions, function, and repairs.

04

Dissecting A-Grade

The factory categories below can all be offered to buyers under the sales label “A-Grade.” Their local names describe how factories classify and select the goods behind that label.

Chaozhou, Tangshan, and Henan are major production areas for bathroom ceramics in China. Across these regions, factories use different terms and rules to divide products into grades. The English phrases in parentheses below are explanatory translations of the Chinese terms.

In **Chaozhou**, factories commonly offer **优等品 (“superior grade”)** (yōu děng pǐn) for pieces that do not need cosmetic surface repair and **合格品 (“conforming grade”)** (hé gé pǐn) for those that do. This repair involves removing a local surface defect and covering the area with a sprayed coating. Factories also offer **总货/汇总 (“mixed-grade supply”)** (zǒng huò huì zǒng), which combines the two with no mixing ratio specified by the term.

Dissecting A-Grade · continued

In **Tangshan**, factories commonly use **U级 (jí)—优级品 (yōu jí pǐn) (“superior grade”)** and **A级 (jí)—合格品 (hé gé pǐn) I (“Grade A, conforming grade I”)**. These factory grades are separated by the defects each permits, with U applying stricter limits than A.

In **Henan**, some factories follow Chaozhou’s division but call the corresponding categories **A级 (jí) (“Grade A”)** and **B级 (jí) (“Grade B”)**. Others group accepted products, including repaired pieces, into a single **合格品 (hé gé pǐn) (“conforming products”)** category.

These categories describe actual product selection, giving you a more useful starting point than A-Grade alone. However, their boundaries differ across regions, and exact limits can still vary between factories using the same name. “Conforming” refers to the factory’s acceptance rules; those rules still need to be compared with your requirements.

ORIGIN NOTE

How “A-Grade” may have caught on

Tangshan was an early center of China’s sanitary-ceramics industry. The sales label “A-Grade” has likely developed from its factory A category. Tangshan’s established position provides a plausible explanation for why suppliers elsewhere would borrow its terminology.

The wording was convenient for export sales: it was easier to use with overseas buyers than explaining local Chinese classifications. The letter A also suggested top quality. **Yet Tangshan’s A category referred to conforming products, while U was the superior grade. Even at its proposed source, A did not identify the best grade.**

Over the years, suppliers applied “A-Grade” to an increasingly broad range of products, encompassing more and more quality levels. Eventually, basic products and premium selections shared the same description, leaving the label effectively empty on its own.

05

What should your A-Grade include?

Whether you are starting a new inquiry or reviewing existing purchases, establish which grade is appropriate for your consumers. Everson helps you work through this using the information you already have. **You do not need a finished specification to start the discussion.**

> **For a new inquiry,** we start with your requirements and any specification or product you want to use as a reference. Where the requirements are still being defined, we work through your intended market, product range, and target price with you.

> **For existing purchases,** we work with you to identify the characteristics you want to retain and any issues you want to address. We review with the factory which requirements will apply to repeat orders, new models, or a change in supply source.

For appearance, we work with you to define the finish and visual consistency your customers expect, especially on the surfaces visible after installation.

For installation, we review the requirements relevant to your market with you and the factory, including connection dimensions covered by applicable product standards or approvals.

> **If you manufacture bathroom cabinets,** we also work through the dimensions and tolerances needed to fit your furniture.

Together, we establish how those points will be checked and record any exceptions. A third-party inspection company can help clarify the checking methods.

Where a written specification is appropriate, we prepare a proposed quality document with exceptions marked beside the relevant requirements. This gives you a clear basis for assessing the offer and resolving outstanding points before agreeing to it.

Have a question about the basins you buy?

Send Everson one question by email or WeChat about an A-Grade offer or a quality issue you want to understand. Include a product reference or specification if available.

We'll provide an initial explanation at no charge and identify any points that need further confirmation for your purchase.

Based on Everson's industry knowledge, supplier experience, and grading documents.