

# **Practical Skills for Work**

## **Unit 3: Tasks and Skills**

## Student's File PSW 3.1 Business Letters

A. Business letters are usually written and set out in a certain way. One standard way to set out a business letter is called "block style".

Your ref: JRL/WKS	P15 Pak Ng Yuen Fotan Shatin Hong Kong 10 October 1996
The Manager William S Freed Personal Financial Planning (Ltd) Cubitt House Old Bailey Street Hong Kong	
Dear Mr Lee	
<u>Hong Kong Seminars</u>	
Further to your fax of 9 October, I am writing to confirm the details of my booking for a place at the seminar on self assessment of tax.	
I would like to book a place on the 1 November seminar which will take place in the Conrad Hotel between 2.00 p.m. - 3.00 p.m. I enclose a cheque for \$500, as requested.	
Yours sincerely	
	
Winnie Sung (Mrs)	
Encl.	

### Student's File PSW 3.1

Look at the letter. Where can you see the following?

the date	address of sender	a heading
name of sender	addressee's name and address	Dear...
references	name and title of sender	Yours...
message(s)		

If you do not know whether the addressee is a man or a woman what do you write?

Dear \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_

If you do not know the addressee's name, how do you close or sign off?

Yours \_\_\_\_\_

If we want to add a more friendly note before we write:

Yours \_\_\_\_\_ or Yours \_\_\_\_\_ we can use these:

*With best wishes/With kind regards*

These friendly closings would not be used the first time you write but when a correspondence has been established.

B. Here are some phrases very often used in business letters. Each phrase has a function. Can you match the phrase to the function? There are two phrases for functions (h) and (e).

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|--|---|
| 1. Further to my telephone call/<br>fax/letter... _____                              | a. giving good news                     |
| 2. I would be grateful if you could... _____   | b. requesting action                    |
| 3. Thank you for your letter/fax... _____  | c. threatening                          |
| 4. Please find enclosed... _____   | d. sending something with the<br>letter |
| 5. I look forward to hearing from<br>you... _____                                    | e. giving bad news                      |
| 6. I am sorry to tell you that... _____  | f. closing a letter                     |
| 7. I am pleased to tell you that... _____  | g. giving good news                     |
| 8. Unless action is taken at once, I<br>will be forced to report you to the... _____ | h. opening a letter                     |
| 9. Unfortunately... _____  |   |

**Student's File PSW 3.2 Main Message**

Look at these situations and write your opening sentence and main message for each one. Compare your ideas with 3-4 other students in the class.

- 1. You have received a letter telling you that you have a place on an intensive English course between 1-14 August. You will be on holiday for five days from 10 August.

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- 2. You have received a letter from your primary school asking you to send an update of your school career in the last five years for their centenary celebrations magazine.

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- 3. You have seen a special offer for a portable phone in the newspaper. You want more information about it.

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## **Student's File PSW 3.3 Holidays & Advertisements**

A group of people are trying to book a holiday with the Shangrila Travel Agency. Unfortunately, things do not always proceed smoothly.

First look at this advertisement.

# **HOLIDAYS IN THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF SHANGRILA**

## **TWO SPECIAL SHANGRILA OFFERS**

### ***HOLIDAY BCEX***

Brisbane - Cairns - 7 nights in Brisbane and the Gold Coast followed by 5 nights in Cairns and trips to the rain forest and the Barrier Reef. Stay in first class accommodation in a central Brisbane hotel plus a beach front resort on the Gold Coast. Stay at the Cairns Upcountry Club for a magical time in far north tropical Queensland. Hot air ballooning, whitewater rafting, sky railway trip, rain forest excursion and a day on the reef included.



Price: \$12,000 per person sharing twin  
(extra bed surcharge available for children under 12)

Departures: October 30 - January 29  
February 1 - March 30

Surcharge between February 4 - 10

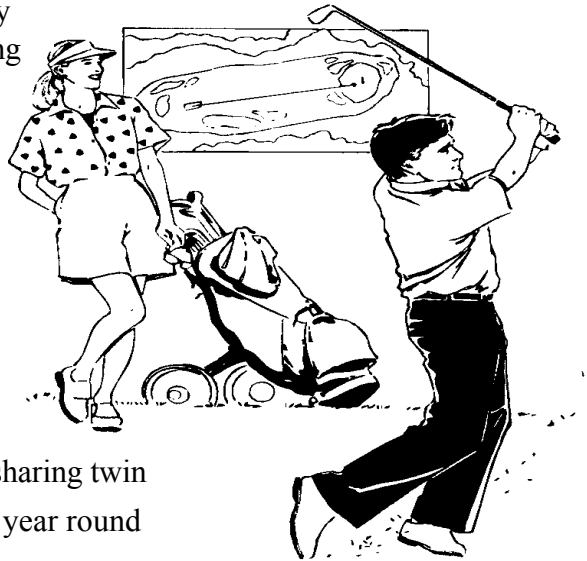
## Student's File PSW 3.3 (cont...)

### HOLIDAY WWNZ

## NEW ZEALAND - THE LAST FRONTIER

14 days touring in the spectacular South Island. Start out from the garden city of Christchurch and tour the land of startling contrasts, forests, mountains, fertile plains, snowy peaks and crystal-blue lakes.

You can be adventurous and go bungy jumping, jet-boating, whitewater rafting and, in season, skiing. Other activities include golf, fishing, whale watching, and visiting the finest wineries in the world. There is a choice of hotels and resort hotels.



Standard Price: \$14,000 per person sharing twin

Departures: Tuesday and Friday year round

**Book now with**

**Shangrila Travel, 8 Duddell Street, Western, HK. Tel 2605-7713,**

**or with the main agents,**

**Terrific Time Travel, 2 Century Street, Central. Tel 2879-3815**

## Student's File PSW 3.4 Listening 1

### Laws on Property Sales

You are going to listen to someone talking about new laws concerning property sales in Hong Kong. The details are summarised below but some of the information is wrong. Read the notes first and then listen to the tape. Note down the mistakes. If the sentence is correct, put a '✓' on the line.

1. Standard measures for gross floor areas have always existed.  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. It has been decided that most recommendations should be accepted.  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. The new laws were passed in April 1996.  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. The inclusion of saleable area will be mandatory in sales brochures.  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. In some cases, flats were found to have living space of less than half their advertised gross floor area.  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. Legislation about the quality of the flats and quantity of information is needed to help buyers make informed choices.  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. Criminal sanctions for breach of regulations cannot be imposed.  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. The Hong Kong Institute of Surveyors has recently been involved in drafting definitions for terms commonly used.  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. The institute wishes to consult the public on proposed guidelines.  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. Lettable area and net area are often quoted for space in commercial buildings.  
\_\_\_\_\_

## **Student's File PSW 3.4 Listening 2**

### **Pronunciation Spot**

1. gross floor area
2. administration
3. recommendations
4. technicalities
5. Legislative Council
6. mandatory
7. anomalies
8. Covenant



## ***Student's File PSW 3.5 Reading Race Text***

### **Common rules for floor area fail to surface**

One of the most marked anomalies of the Hong Kong real estate market must be the lack of a standard definition for gross floor area.

In Hong Kong, each developer or landlord can have their own definition.

"In many cases, they include the podium and the garden or footpath with the size of the flat or office," one agent said.

So, when you go in search of your dream home or office, a browse through the sales literature, with prices based on gross floor area, tells you little about the amount of space actually available.

Ask any developer, landlord or even the ubiquitous man on the street for a definition of gross floor area and they will most likely shake their head, think for a while and talk about lift lobbies and the like.

Some might even confess they have no idea how the developer or landlord establishes the gross floor area.

It is of little or no help checking building plans at the Buildings Department because the gross floor area in approved plans could be different from the area calculated by developers when they sell the properties.

Analysts said the definition in the building ordinance was not applied to property sales.

Most agents said the lack of a common definition had led to myriad problems.

In some cases, people buying according to a developer's area specifications found they had bought considerably less living space than had been advertised.

For builders redeveloping older residential premises on small sites, some valuation experts said they had been buildings with efficiency ratings of below 50 per cent in the worst cases reported.

Nobody appears to know exactly why developers and the Government have never come up with a workable definition of gross floor area for property sales.

As a result, situations where gross floor area has no relation to actual living space "is a tradition with the Hong Kong market", one valuer said.

"There were few rules concerning the selling of property or what constituted the saleable area or net area," he said.

Disagreements over what constituted common areas and how the share of these areas should be allocated to individual units of a development were cited as a hurdle.

## **Student's File PSW 3.5 Reading Race Text (cont...)**

For instance, most developers counted a bay window as part of the gross floor area of a unit on sale, but a bay window was not included in the floor area of an approved plan, analysts said.

In the past few years, thanks to complaints from the public and calls from the Law Reform Commission and the Consumer Council, things are beginning to change.

While developers still sell flats based on the gross floor area, sales literature for uncompleted flats in the majority of today's residential developments under the Government's consent scheme, must also include the saleable area.

Thankfully, this saleable area does have a common definition which allows the buyer to compare one development to another.

Developers agree the saleable area "means the floor area exclusively allocated to the unit including balconies, but excluding common areas such as stairs, lift shafts, lobbies and communal toilets.

Estate agents said this definition allowed themselves and buyers to compare different sized flats in different locations on a "like-by-like basis".

However, landlords redeveloping older sites in Hong Kong which are not covered by the government consent scheme need not provide saleable area in the sales literature.

In a report published in April last year, the Land Reform Commission recommended the Government standardise in law the term 'gross floor area' and make the inclusion of saleable area mandatory in sales brochures.

It also proposed there should be criminal sanctions, from fines to imprisonment, for regulation breaches.

The commission began deliberations on the problem in November 1992. The Government has decided to adopt most of its recommendations and hopes to table the legislation to the Legislative Council next year, which is expected to address the failure to use a standard gross floor area measure.

The commission said, "The definition of gross floor area should exclude such common areas as air-conditioning and mechanical rooms, refuse chambers and pump rooms, transformer rooms, water tanks, lift machine rooms, lifts and staircases passing through car parking floors, but include clubhouses, management offices and a caretaker room."

As the initial focus of the commission's report was on residential property, it is unclear whether the new legislation would extend to other sectors.

In the office sector, for instance, it is again up to the discretion of the developer to decide on the gross floor area.

## **Student's File PSW 3.5 Reading Race Text (cont...)**

"It is only when leasing that people talk about usable area," another valuation expert said.

A number of agents said most grade A office buildings in Hong Kong were about 70 to 80 per cent efficient with some developers including the footpath in the gross floor area.

One of the more bizarre features of the local office market happens when a floor is subdivided and then sold.

The gross floor area of the sections could be exaggerated to eventually add up to more than the originally stated floor area, analysts said.

Agents said this was "normal" practice and arose from landlords simply "inventing" the floor area of the subdivided floors to suit their economic interests.

While most analysts expected the new legislation on floor measurement to enhance consumer protection in property sales, some argued it represented a further intervention by the Government.

They said home-buyers were now more aware and informed of the properties on offer and the "shrunk flat" syndrome was no longer popular or a serious problem.

Even Consumer Council officials said consumers today were smarter and that the saleable area information contained in sales literature was enough for people to do comparison shopping.

By the same token, many agents still said home-buyers should be diligent in checking the efficiency of developments they were looking at.

It is believed the new Estate Agents Bill will make it mandatory for agents to measure the space they are selling or leasing.

A radical proposal floating in the industry is to have an overhaul of the property sales tradition in Hong Kong by pricing on the basis of saleable area instead of gross area.

Some analysts said saleable area was the most meaningful definition to go by but such a move would possibly face strong resistance from the public, estate agents and developers.

One analyst said selling properties on the basis of gross floor area was a long-standing habit in the territory and would be difficult to change.

"It could be like the change from the imperial system to the metric system in measurement," he said.

## Student's File PSW 3.6 The Anju Scheme

### China homes plan comes under attack

Match these halves of the sentences.

- |  |     |   |
|--|-----|---|
| 1. China's answer to improving housing conditions for the poor   | ___ | a. was small compared to the country's overall housing construction figures   |
| 2. "The <i>anju</i> (comfortable housing) scheme was hampered by unrealistic targets and insufficient volume",                   | ___ | b. fresh thinking. <i>Anju</i> is not the end of the story," he said.   |
| 3. The scheme also imposed enormous financial burdens  | ___ | c. some cities did not welcome the initiative   |
| 4. Mr Hamer, former World Bank principal economist for Urban Sections in China, said the amount of <i>anju</i> flat construction | ___ | d. has been criticised as commercially unviable.  |
| 5. "The <i>anju</i> scheme   | ___ | e. for developers because volume was limited.   |
| 6. "Instead the mainland needed more creative schemes  | ___ | f. said Andrew Hamer, executive director of the University of Hong Kong's Centre for Real Estate and Urban Economics. |
| 7. "There is a crying need for   | ___ | g. that would cater to a wider range of income earners."  |
| 8. <i>Anju</i> is a nationwide scheme aimed at increasing  | ___ | h. the living space of those with less than 43 square feet of space per capita.                                       |
| 9. Mr Hamer said such projects were ultimately not a good market   | ___ | i. through exemptions or cuts in taxes and fees, and reductions in land costs.  |
| 10. To attract domestic and foreign investors, projects were heavily subsidised by local authorities                             | ___ | j. does not take China very far," he said.  |
| 11. As a result,   | ___ | k. on local governments he said.  |

### Student's File PSW 3.8 Comprehension Questions

Now that you have finished the sentence matching and the shared dictation and checked that you have a complete and correct text, answer these questions about the text.

1. According to the author, which of the following are true?
  - A. *Anju* is bad for developers because the local authorities are not supportive.
  - B. Developers do not know how to break into any potential market.
  - C. The volume of development is not sufficient to make a profitable market.
  - D. Development was heavily subsidised and this led to a slow pace of construction.
  
2. The author thinks that..
  - A. the *anju* scheme will help millions of people.
  - B. the *anju* scheme will increase living space, nationwide.
  - C. the *anju* scheme needs to be set at different levels.
  - D. the *anju* scheme is an improvement on the previous system.
  
3. What does "the initiative" refer to in paragraph 4, line 15.
  - A. Cuts in taxes and fees.
  - B. The *anju* scheme.
  - C. reductions in land costs
  - D. foreign investors.
  
4. What does "to fork out" mean in paragraph 11?
  - A. To throw something out.
  - B. To save something.
  - C. To hit out.
  - D. To pay out.
  
5. The author thinks that...
  - A. workers should always be encouraged to buy flats.
  - B. workers have always been provided with housing.
  - C. workers should always pay minimal rents.
  - D. workers have always covered the costs of flats.
  
6. The author's attitude to selling state-owned flats is...
  - A. that the sales will lose money.
  - B. that it is good to encourage such sales.
  - C. that it is difficult to reach target sales.
  - D. that sales will not match demand.

## Student's File PSW 3.9 Meetings

- A. You are part of the Ho Rich Development Company and there is a meeting to discuss the new development in Sai Ying Poon, Western District. There is to be a housing estate for 3,000 people which will have modern facilities. The meeting is to discuss which facilities should be built.

Think about the facilities you would like to be built and make notes below. There will have to be a priority order as not everything can be built at once.

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- B. Here are some phrases to help with the discussion.

- |                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| At the beginning:     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Shall we begin/start?</li> <li>- We need to discuss...</li> <li>- We need to talk about...</li> <li>- We are here to talk about...</li> </ul>  |
| Checking with others: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Could you explain that again?</li> <li>- I'm sorry, I didn't understand that last point.</li> <li>- What do you mean exactly?</li> <li>- Do you mean...?</li> </ul>  |
| Taking turns:         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Does Ching have anything to add/say?</li> <li>- Can I say something about that?</li> <li>- I'd like to add...</li> <li>- What do you think?</li> <li>- Do you want to say something about this?</li> </ul>   |
| Agreeing/Disagreeing: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Do we all agree?</li> <li>- So, it's decided that...</li> <li>- Are we in agreement?</li> <li>- I don't think we have agreement.</li> <li>- I think that Ching doesn't agree with this.</li> <li>- I don't agree/because...</li> <li>- I can't agree/because...</li> </ul> |

## Student's File PSW 3.10 Careers

Read the following article about being an accountant or working in the world of accountancy and complete the spaces with a suitable word. Use pencil for your first attempt. If you need help or want to check, use the word bank. Some words can be used more than once.

### Careers - Accountancy

Large international firms of accountants are looking for qualified personnel for their auditing and taxation departments to meet the companies' growth both locally and in China.

Generally speaking, companies will \_\_\_\_\_ their local \_\_\_\_\_ by about 10% in the next 12 months.

One firm has more than 1,200 \_\_\_\_\_ in Hong Kong specialising in auditing, accounting, taxation, tax \_\_\_\_\_, corporate \_\_\_\_\_ services, corporate \_\_\_\_\_ services and \_\_\_\_\_ consultancy services.

This firm represents \_\_\_\_\_ 10,000 companies in Hong Kong and was the first \_\_\_\_\_ company to \_\_\_\_\_ in China. It did so in 1993 through a \_\_\_\_\_ with Shanghai Certified Public Accountants. "It is a good \_\_\_\_\_ to experience a different business, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_."

One of the partners has been visiting Hong Kong universities talking to \_\_\_\_\_ about a \_\_\_\_\_ in \_\_\_\_\_.

The company will consider \_\_\_\_\_ from any \_\_\_\_\_ with a degree. Recruits must \_\_\_\_\_ as Certified Public Accountants (CPA) which involves three years of \_\_\_\_\_ experience. The firm has a structured career ladder for recruits that allows employees to \_\_\_\_\_ within the company, normally at intervals for the \_\_\_\_\_ five years. After five years at staff \_\_\_\_\_, an employee can be considered for a \_\_\_\_\_ in \_\_\_\_\_ career individuals who successfully advance to \_\_\_\_\_ can become \_\_\_\_\_ after 12 years of service. The company has more than 40 partners in Hong Kong.

One such partner said that \_\_\_\_\_ started as staff accountants and received on-the-job \_\_\_\_\_ at the client's \_\_\_\_\_. This \_\_\_\_\_ training is just as important as the \_\_\_\_\_ training because a recruit will start to gain a feel for the \_\_\_\_\_ of the \_\_\_\_\_. They will receive \_\_\_\_\_ from senior \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ and it helps in their \_\_\_\_\_ growth.

**Student's File PSW 3.10 (cont...)**Careers - Accountancy

The company emphasises \_\_\_\_\_ education. \_\_\_\_\_ from staff to \_\_\_\_\_ are required to take regular two-or three-week \_\_\_\_\_ training \_\_\_\_\_. As someone advances within the \_\_\_\_\_, they will have a \_\_\_\_\_ of all \_\_\_\_\_ junior to their own.

The company offers a \_\_\_\_\_ for employees on \_\_\_\_\_ of their \_\_\_\_\_, a 13-month salary, with the \_\_\_\_\_ paid at Chinese New Year, overtime, 15 day's \_\_\_\_\_ leave and a five-day \_\_\_\_\_.

Other \_\_\_\_\_ include group life insurance and 80% \_\_\_\_\_ cover for clinical visits, hospitalisation and \_\_\_\_\_. There is also a \_\_\_\_\_ provident \_\_\_\_\_.

Travel within the \_\_\_\_\_ is available through a strategic career \_\_\_\_\_ programmes. Employees can apply to work at other \_\_\_\_\_ within the \_\_\_\_\_ chain for 18 months. This experience is meant to help expose \_\_\_\_\_ to different \_\_\_\_\_ and to broaden \_\_\_\_\_ by learning from \_\_\_\_\_.

Work with 2-3 partners and help each other.



## Student's File PSW 3.10 (cont...)

### Word Bank

increase	staff	accountants	management
advisory	secretarial	planning	set up
more than	international	recruits	training
practical	accounting	workplace	demands
professional	profession	colleagues	partners
supervisors	continuous	employees	core
programmes	company	positions	complete
understanding	bonus	completion	exams
joint venture	opportunity	social	cultural
environment	students	career	accountancy
qualify	academic	background	advance
yearly	individuals	first	level
position	partners	annual	week
benefits	medical	operations	voluntary
fund	offices	global	skills

### **Time to Think**

Now you have worked through three units on Practical Skills for Work. You have dealt with letters, office layouts, meetings, directions, inventories, CVs, job applications and interviews. In Unit 3 there has also been a focus on similar language skills to ones needed in the UE exam.

Some of the Practical Skills for Work will be useful to you in your future but maybe not in the short term. Whenever and wherever you use them, good luck!