

Practical Skills for Work

Unit 3: Tasks and Skills

Aims

- To practise writing standard business letters
- To practise taking notes while listening
- To practise the language of suggestion and negotiation within a roleplay
- To practise reading sub-skills: skimming and scanning
- To read intensively and answer comprehension questions
- To practise listening, speaking and writing in an integrated task (Paired dictation)
- To review and listen to a parallel task

Materials

- | | | |
|-----------|------------------------|--|
| • PSW3.1 | Student's File | Business Letters |
| • PSW3.2 | Student's File | Main Message |
| • PSW3.3 | Student's File | Holidays & Advertisements |
| • PSW3.3 | Teacher's Resource Kit | Task Cards for Holidays and Advertisements |
| • PSW3.4 | Student's File | New laws to take a tighter grip on sales (Listening 1), Pronunciation Spot (Listening 2) |
| • PSW3.5 | Student's File: | Reading Race Text (Common rules for floor area fail to surface) |
| • PSW3.5 | Teacher's Resource Kit | Reading Race Question Strips (Common rules for floor area fail to surface) |
| • PSW3.6 | Student's File | Academic questions (The <i>anju</i> scheme) |
| • PSW3.7 | Teacher's Resource Kit | Paired Dictation |
| • PSW3.8 | Student's File | Comprehension questions |
| • PSW3.9 | Student's File | Meetings |
| • PSW3.9 | Tapescript only | Review and Renew (Listening 3) |
| • PSW3.10 | Student's File | Cloze Passage - (Careers - Accountancy) |
| • PSW3.10 | Student's File | Word Bank for Cloze Passage |

Procedure

1. Ask the class what kind of letters they write and receive (*Family letters, letters of complaint, pen-pal letters, official school letters, love letters, business letters*). Discuss the differences in terms of formality and informality. Elicit why business letters have to be very clear. (*They are a written record, they are used to ask for and negotiate for important things, they instruct people to do things; they request or promise action - in other words they have a clear purpose and often have a causal effect.*)
2. Refer students to **PSW3.1**. Check answers quickly (*Sir/Madam, faithfully, faithfully or sincerely*).
3. Ask students to do **PSW3.2**. They are to write the opening sentence and main message for each of the three letters. When they have finished, write 1-2-3 at the top of columns on the b/b. Write up the most commonly used openings in each column. When you have finished, introduce letters of complaint and faxes seeking information quickly.
4. Introduce the idea of holidays, package tours and elicit problems that may arise from dealing with travel agents (*Prices go up, agents go bankrupt, holiday details are not correct, planes are overbooked*). Refer students to **PSW 3.3**.
5. Divide the class into as many trios as possible, then assign roles and tasks. (e.g. a class of 30 would become 10 groups of THREE. 3 groups of three would be the holiday group, 3 groups of three would be Shangrila Travel, and 4 groups of three would be Terrific Time Travel).
6. Copy as necessary and give out the task cards (Teacher's Resource Kit PSW 3.3) to each group. Make sure they know their co-groups.
7. When all the letters/faxes have been written and delivered, the situation will be as follows:
 - (1) The holiday group will have booked a holiday.
 - (2) The Shangrila group will have written to Terrific Time Travel asking for an explanation about the UPCOUNTRY CLUB.
 - (3) The Terrific Time Travel group will have written to Shangrila about increase in prices.
8. The groups must now respond.
 - 8.1 Shangrila must write to the holiday group to tell them that (a) prices are up (and why) and that (b) IF they have chosen Australia, the UPCOUNTRY CLUB will not be available.
 - 8.2 Terrific Time Travel must write an explanation about the unavailability of the UPCOUNTRY CLUB and must offer an alternative.

- 8.3 The Holiday group is waiting for news of confirmation. The teacher gives them a new advertisement so that they must discuss whether to make a new booking and cancel the Shangrila booking.
9. At this point you can set up a role play between the Holiday group and the Shangrila group.
10. The role play finishes the section of the unit dealing with writing business letters. The unit now moves onto input on property laws using listening and reading skills. Introduce the topic and write up some suggested sizes of various types of flat in Hong Kong (*Public housing, sandwich class, luxury private, mid price development, post-war housing (1950s), village housing, company flats, government quarters etc*).
11. Discuss what space within a flat is usable and what is not. Then refer students to **PSW3.4** Listening 1. When students have read the worksheet, play the tape. Tell them to check with a partner before you play it 2-3 times for further checking. Always try to let students relisten and check rather than telling them the answers.
12. **PSW 3.4** Listening 2 is the Pronunciation Spot. Ask students to practise reading the words.
13. **PSW3.5** is a long piece of intensive reading. By dividing the class into 4-6 groups, you can make a reading race. The questions are copied and cut up into question strips. Each group has a "runner" who comes to take a question strip back to the group to answer. They then check their answer with the teacher and take another strip if the answer is correct. The question strips should be in random order so that each group will get different questions at different times.
14. Make enough sets of questions for the number of groups, keeping the key for yourself. It is useful to copy the questions onto different coloured paper to differentiate the groups. (Question strips are in the Teachers Resource Kit PSW 3.5)
15. Refer students to PSW3.5 Reading Race Text. When the race is over, give out a copy of the full set of questions for extra checking and consolidation. The reading race should raise motivation and focuses on skimming and scanning skills.
- The content link between usable space and the next article is accommodation.
16. The article (The *anju* scheme) has been exploited in three activities. **PSW3.6** is a sentence-halves matching exercise and the follow on activity **PSW3.7**. is a paired dictation, based on a continuation of the same text. This shared dictation will help students to practise speaking/pronunciation/listening. The consolidation activity is **PSW3.8**, a multiple choice comprehension.
17. Students can now move into a discussion and role play. Set the scene by asking about the roles of people at formal meetings, *i.e. chairperson, secretary, committee members*. Divide the class into three groups so that each group can form one committee.

Refer students to **PSW3.9** and ask the groups to read part A and decide on a chairperson and a secretary to take notes.

18. When the groups are ready, let them start their discussion. It may not be possible to reach a definite conclusion. The important focus is on practising the language. The teacher should monitor, help and check (especially on turn taking).
19. When the groups have finished, play the tape of a very similar discussion so that the class can listen to and review the language they used. Do not play the tape first. This tape acts as an added motivator to show students they are on the right track. It is an activity for after they have worked with something challenging. Then, they listen, review and renew their efforts.
20. The final exercise **PSW3.10** is about a career in accounting. There is a large word bank to help students. You may go through the first two paragraphs with the whole class to set small groups off on the right track.
21. A final consolidation would be for each student to write a personal statement about which career they would like to follow and why.

Student's File PSW 3.1 (Key)

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 function (h) and (e).

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

Teacher's Resource Kit PSW 3.3

Task Cards for Holidays and Advertisements

HOLIDAY GROUP

In your group decide which holiday you want to take together. Then check:

- the number of rooms needed
- if it's possible to have an extra bed in a twin room
- when you want to go

Write a letter or fax to Shangrila to book the holiday.

Deliver the letter or fax to your Shangrila group.

SHANGRILA GROUP

You have just heard from your contacts in Australia that the UPCOUNTRY CLUB will not be ready in time. All Shangrila Holidays are booked into this hotel. You do not want to take bookings on holidays that may have to be cancelled. You need to write to Terrific Time Travel as the main agents for explanation and clarification.

Write a letter or fax to ask them what is happening.

Deliver your letter or fax to the Terrific Time Travel group.

TERRIFIC TIME TRAVEL GROUP

You have heard that all prices of holidays to Australia and New Zealand will go up in January due to increased oil prices. This means that prices will rise by 5% across the board. Write or fax to Shangrila Travel (your most important agent) and inform them.

Deliver your letter or fax to Shangrila Travel.

When the first stage is finished and all the letters have been written and delivered, give this advertisement to the HOLIDAY GROUP.

***COSMIC TOURS - THE NEW WORLD AGENT OFFERS
THE CHANCE OF A LIFETIME***

2 weeks in New Zealand and Fiji with a stopover in Brisbane. The tour price includes full buffet breakfast and accommodation in beach cottages at the Amicos Resorts.

Price: \$12,800 per person. Book NOW. Places are limited!

Student's File PSW 3.4 Listening 1 (Key)

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.
There has been an absence of standard measures.
2. It has been decided that most recommendations should be accepted.
✓
3. The new laws were passed in April 1996.
It is hoped the new laws will be passed before the 1997 summer break.
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.
Criminal sanctions are proposed.
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.
The institute wishes to consult its members.
10. Lettable area and net area are often quoted for space in commercial buildings.
✓

Teacher's Resource Kit PSW 3.5**Reading Race Question Strips: Common rules for floor area fail to surface**

What is one of the most marked anomalies in the real estate market in Hong Kong?

What is often included in the gross floor area, according to one agent?

How helpful is the sales literature about the amount of space available?

Is the gross floor area in approved plans the same as the area calculated by developers?

Why are Building Department plans defined differently from developers?

Why does the "normal" practice of landlords "inventing" the floor area happen?

Do all the property analysts agree that the new legislation is a good thing?

What is the feeling about the "shrunk flat" syndrome?

What does the Consumer Council think of today's consumer?

What will the new Estate Agents Bill make mandatory?

When did the Land Reform Commission publish a report?

What does the LRC say can be included in gross floor area?

Will the legislation extend to sectors other than residential?

Who decides on the gross floor area in the office sector?

Teacher's Resource Kit PSW 3.5 (cont...)**Reading Race Question Strips**

What is the percentage of efficiency in most grade A office buildings?

What happen when an office floor is subdivided and sold?

What must be included in sales literature for uncompleted flats under the government's consent scheme?

What is the common definition of the saleable area?

What does the common definition of the saleable area allow people to do?

What is not covered by the government's consent scheme?

When did the Land Reform Commission begin thinking about the problem of standardising in law, common terms?

What happened to some older residential premises when they were redeveloped?

What is considered a tradition in the Hong Kong market?

What is one of the examples of a difference between an approved plan's gross floor area and a developer's unit of sale gross floor area?

Which three groups have complained about the anomalies and helped to bring about change?

What is the radical proposal being floated in the industry?

The questions are not numbered as this would guide the reader through the article too easily and the sub skills being practised are skimming and scanning.

Teacher's Resource Kit PSW 3.5 (Key)

Reading Race Question Strips

What is one of the most marked anomalies in the real estate market in Hong Kong?

lack of standard definition for gross floor area

What is often included in the gross floor area, according to one agent?

the podium, the garden or foot path

How helpful is the sales literature about the amount of space available?

it tells you very little

Is the gross floor area in approved plans the same as the area calculated by developers?

No

Why are Building Department plans defined differently from developers?

because the definitions are not applied to property sales

Why does the "normal" practice of landlords "inventing" the floor area happen?

to suit their economic interests

Do all the property analysts agree that the new legislation is a good thing?

most think it will enhance consumer protection, others think it represents further intervention by the government

What is the feeling about the "shrunk flat" syndrome?

it is no longer a serious problem

What does the Consumer Council think of today's consumers?

they are smarter and people are able to do comparison shopping

What will the new Estate Agents Bill make mandatory?

for agents to measure the space they are selling

When did the Land Reform Commission publish a report?

in April 1995

Teacher's Resource Kit PSW 3.5 (Key) (cont...)

What does the LRC say can be included in gross floor area?

club houses, management offices and a caretaker room

Will the legislation extend to sectors other than residential?

this is unclear

Who decides on the gross floor area in the office sector?

it is up to the developer

What is the percentage of efficiency in most grade A office buildings?

70/80%

What happens when an office floor is subdivided and sold?

the gross floor area of the sections is exaggerated and eventually adds up to more than the original area

What must be included in sales literature for uncompleted flats under the government's consent scheme?

the saleable area

What is the common definition of the saleable area?

the floor area exclusively allocated to the unit including balconies, but excluding common areas such as stairs, lift shafts, lobbies and communal toilets

What does the common definition of the saleable area allow people to do?

compare different sized flats in different locations on a "like-by-like" basis

What is not covered by the government's consent scheme?

redevelopment of older sites

When did the Land Reform Commission begin thinking about the problem of standardising in law, common terms?

November 1992

What happened to some older residential premises when they were redeveloped?

efficiency ratings were below 50%

Teacher's Resource Kit PSW3.5 (Key) (cont...)

What is considered a tradition in the Hong Kong market?

gross floor area has no relation to actual living space

What is one of the examples of a difference between an approved plan's gross floor area and a developer's unit of sale gross floor area?

the bay window is counted by the developer but not included in the floor area by the approved plan

Which three groups have complained about the anomalies and helped to bring about change?

the public, the Law Reform Commission and the Consumer Council

What is the radical proposal being floated in the industry?

Pricing based on saleable area instead of gross area

Student's File PSW 3.6 (Key) 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 | <u>d</u> | 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", | <u>f</u> | b. fresh thinking. <i>Anju</i> is not the end of the story," he said. |
| 3. The scheme also imposed enormous financial burdens | <u>k</u> | 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 | <u>a</u> | d. has been criticised as commercially unviable. |
| 5. "The <i>anju</i> scheme | <u>i</u> | e. for developers because volume was limited. |
| 6. "Instead the mainland needed more creative schemes | <u>g</u> | 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 | <u>b</u> | g. that would cater to a wider range of income earners." |
| 8. <i>Anju</i> is a nationwide scheme aimed at increasing | <u>h</u> | 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 | <u>e</u> | 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 | <u>j</u> | j. does not take China very far," he said. |
| 11. As a result, | <u>c</u> | k. on local governments he said. |

Teacher's Resource Kit PSW 3.7

Paired Dictation (A)

Mr Hamer cited Chengdu and Ningbo _____
_____ was unable to meet targets.
_____ 1.98 million square feet _____
_____ last year against the year's target
of _____.

Ningbo had an initial goal of _____
_____ but expected to have completed only _____
_____.

Mr Hamer said the *anju* scheme _____
_____, under which work units and enterprises provided housing.
_____, _____, on how to break into the "potential market" at
different levels beyond the *anju* scheme.
_____, _____, at an annual rate of
4 to 5 percent.

_____ large sums of money to buy flats after traditionally being provided with
housing.

_____ to cover the operation, management and maintenance costs of
purchased flats.

_____, workers have been encouraged
to buy flats they occupy, _____.

Mr Hamer warned that there was no future in such sales _____.

Taken from SCMP Business News 2/10/96

Teacher's Resource Kit PSW3.7Paired Dictation (B)

_____ as examples where
the pace of construction _____.

Chengdu completed _____ of gross floor area of
anju flats _____
5.65 million square feet.

_____ 2.69 million square
feet of gross floor area _____
_____ 1.72 million square feet by the end of next year.

_____ was an improvement on the
previous system, _____
_____.

However, the central government or developers had yet to examine _____

_____.

Demand for housing is soaring, with China's urban population estimated to be growing

_____.

Many Chinese people are reluctant to fork out _____

_____.

They pay minimal rents which are not even enough _____
_____, _____
_____.

Under the country's housing reforms, _____
_____, which state-owned enterprises
sell at below cost.

_____ because they were money-losing
transactions for the government.

Taken from SCMP Business News 2/10/96

Teacher's Resource Kit PSW 3.7 (Key)

Paired Dictation (A)

Mr Hamer cited Chengdu and Ningbo as examples where the pace of construction was unable to meet targets.

Chengdu completed 1.98 million square feet of gross floor area of anju flats last year against the year's target of 5.65 million square feet.

Ningbo had an initial goal of 2.69 million square feet of gross floor area but expected to have completed only 1.72 million square feet by the end of next year.

Mr Hamer said the *anju* scheme was an improvement on the previous system, under which work units and enterprises provided housing.

However, the central government or developers had yet to examine on how to break into the "potential market" at different levels beyond the *anju* scheme.

Demand for housing is soaring, with China's urban population estimated to be growing at an annual rate of 4 to 5 percent.

Many Chinese people are reluctant to fork out large sums of money to buy flats after traditionally being provided with housing.

They pay minimal rents which are not even enough to cover the operation, management and maintenance costs of purchased flats.

Under the country's housing reforms, workers have been encouraged to buy flats they occupy, which state-owned enterprises sell at below cost.

Mr Hamer warned that there was no future in such sales because they were money-losing transactions for the government.

Taken from SCMP Business News 2/10/96

Teacher's Resource Kit PSW 3.7 (Key)

Peer Dictation (B)

Mr Hamer cited Chengdu and Ningbo as examples where the pace of construction was unable to meet targets.

Chengdu completed 1.98 million square feet of gross floor area of anju flats last year against the year's target of 5.65 million square feet.

Ningbo had an initial goal of 2.69 million square feet of gross floor area but expected to have completed only 1.72 million square feet by the end of next year.

Mr Hamer said the anju scheme was an improvement on the previous system, under which work units and enterprises provided housing.

However, the central government or developers had yet to examine on how to break into the "potential market" at different levels beyond the anju scheme.

Demand for housing is soaring, with China's urban population estimated to be growing at an annual rate of 4 to 5 percent.

Many Chinese people are reluctant to fork out large sums of money to buy flats after traditionally being provided with housing.

They pay minimal rents which are not even enough to cover the operation, management and maintenance costs of purchased flats.

Under the country's housing reforms, workers have been encouraged to buy flats they occupy, which state-owned enterprises sell at below cost.

Mr Hamer warned that there was no future in such sales because they were money-losing transactions for the government.

Taken from SCMP Business News 2/10/96

PSW 3.7 Complete Text

Anju is a nationwide scheme aimed at increasing the living space of those with less than 43 square feet of space per capita.

Mr Hamer said such projects were ultimately not a good market for developers because volume was limited.

To attract domestic and foreign investors, projects were heavily subsidised by local authorities through exemptions or cuts in taxes and fees, and reductions in land costs.

As a result, some cities did not welcome the initiative.

Mr Hamer cited Chengdu and Ningbo as examples where the pace of construction was unable to meet targets.

Chengdu completed 1.98 million square feet of gross floor area of *anju* flats last year against the year's target of 5.65 million square feet.

Ningbo had an initial goal of 2.69 million square feet of gross floor area but expected to have completed only 1.72 million square feet by the end of next year.

Mr Hamer said the *anju* scheme was an improvement on the previous system, under which work units and enterprises provided housing.

However, the central government or developers had yet to examine on how to break into the "potential market" at different levels beyond the *anju* scheme.

Demand for housing is soaring, with China's urban population estimated to be growing at an annual rate of 4 to 5 percent.

Many Chinese people are reluctant to fork out large sums of money to buy flats after traditionally being provided with housing.

They pay minimal rents which are not even enough to cover the operation, management and maintenance costs of purchased flats.

Under the country's housing reforms, workers have been encouraged to buy flats they occupy, which state-owned enterprises sell at below cost.

Mr Hamer warned that there was no future in such sales because they were money-losing transactions for the government.

Student's File PSW 3.8 (Key)

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 18.
 - 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 stated-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 3.10 (Key) Careers

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 increase their local staff by about 10% in the next 12 months.

One firm has more than 1,200 accountants in Hong Kong specialising in auditing, accounting, taxation, tax planning, corporate advisory services, corporate secretarial services and management consultancy services.

This firm represents more than 10,000 companies in Hong Kong and was the first international accounting company to set up in China. It did so in 1993 through a joint venture with Shanghai Certified Public Accountants. "It is a good opportunity to experience a different business, social and cultural environment." [*social and cultural can be interchanged*]

One of the partners has been visiting Hong Kong universities talking to students about a career in accounting.

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

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

The company emphasises continuous education. Employees from staff to partners are required to take regular two-or three-week core training programmes. As someone advances within the company, they will have a complete understanding of all positions junior to their own.

The company offers a bonus for employees on completion of their professional exams, a 13-month salary, with the bonus paid at Chinese New Year, overtime, 15 days' annual leave and a five-day week.

Other benefits include group life insurance and 80% medical cover for clinical visits, hospitalisation and operations. There is also a voluntary provident fund.

Travel within the company is available through a strategic career development programmes. Employees can apply to work at other offices within the global chain for 18 months. This experience is meant to help expose individuals to different environments and to broaden skills by learning from colleagues.