

SMART

Home Hunting

Fifth Edition



**The Key to Renting Your Perfect
Place in Hong Kong**

Daniel W. Lam

SMART Home Hunting: The Key to Renting Your Perfect Place in Hong Kong

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Introduction

Housing in Hong Kong is perpetually in high demand. The process of finding a home here can be a source of great stress if one is unfamiliar with where to begin or unaware of the procedures involved. This eBook aims to equip you with essential knowledge for home hunting in the city, with a light-hearted sprinkling of humour to make this seemingly tedious subject more enjoyable.

This compact volume has been meticulously crafted based on my extensive 15 years of hands-on experience assisting clients from diverse backgrounds in finding their ideal homes across various regions of Hong Kong. This book will guide you through your home-searching journey in a SMART (Specific, Mindful, Adaptable, Ready, and Tactical) manner. Moreover, the bonus chapters offer valuable advice on selecting and collaborating with local estate agents, as well as guidelines for being a responsible tenant. Whether you are a newcomer or a long-time resident of this vibrant city, you will find useful information, insights, suggestions, and tips in the following pages.

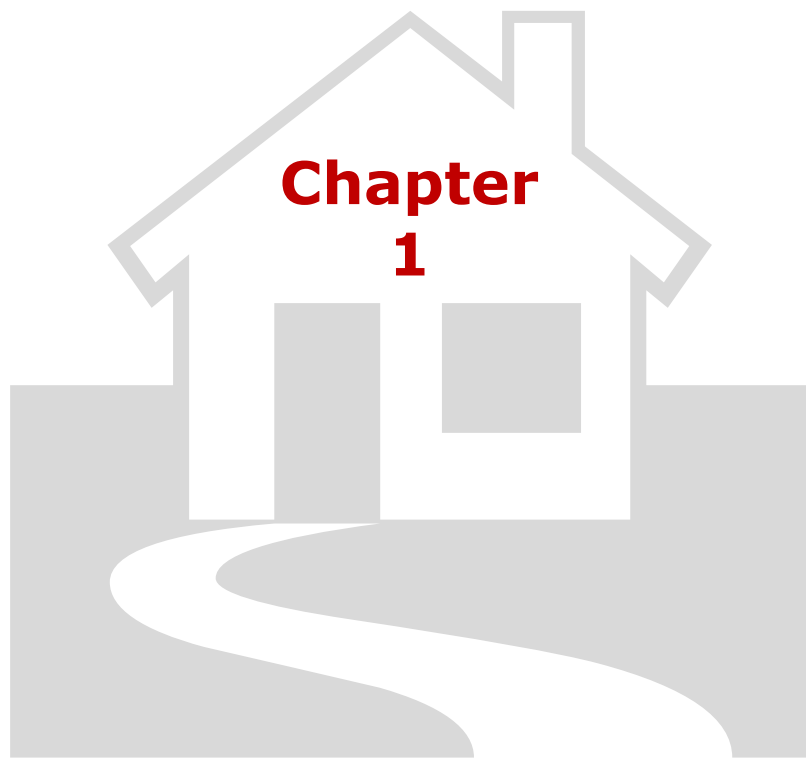
The content primarily covers renting a residential property, but much of it applies to buying as well. Potential buyers should stay informed about key factors such as stamp duty rates, interest rates, and loan-to-value ratios. Keep in mind that the real estate market is constantly evolving, so it is prudent to conduct thorough research and seek expert guidance before making any significant investment decisions.

I hope you find this little book a helpful companion as you search for a home in Hong Kong. May God guide you to the right place and connect you with the right people at just the right time!

Daniel W. Lam



P.S. A huge thank you to David R. Henry, my long-time and multi-talented friend, for editing and livening up this book. His keen eye and sharp mind have greatly assisted in putting this together. It has been a real pleasure working with him.



'If you set goals and go after them with all the determination you can muster, your gifts will take you places that will amaze you.'

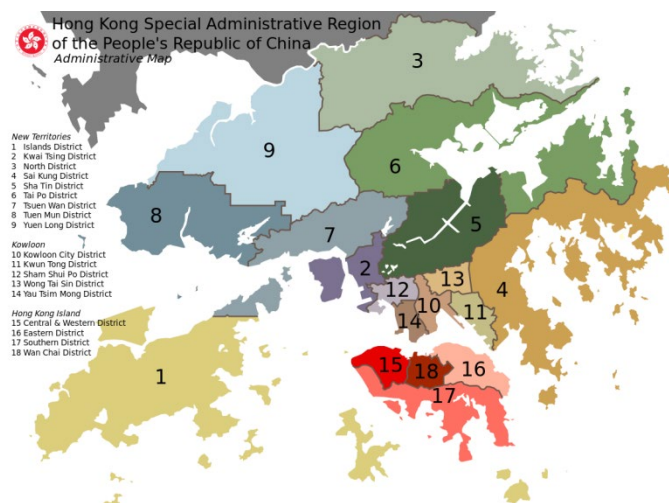
—Les Brown

Be Specific: Defining Your Property Requirements

Thinking through and visualising your needs and wants is the first step to finding your perfect home in Hong Kong. **TIP:** To get a better picture of your desired living space, you should write down all the factors that are important to you. It would be helpful to create a list of your *must-haves* and *nice-to-haves*. Prioritising your preferences can also save you a headache when it comes to choosing a property. Now, let's go through the major considerations one by one.

1. Location

Hong Kong, a special administrative region of the People's Republic of China, consists of three main areas: Hong Kong Island, the Kowloon Peninsula, and the New Territories, which include some 260 outlying islands. The city is subdivided into 18 administrative districts, as shown in the map below:



By User: Moddlyg - File: Map of Hong Kong 18 Districts zh.svg, CC BY-SA 3.0
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=31210932>

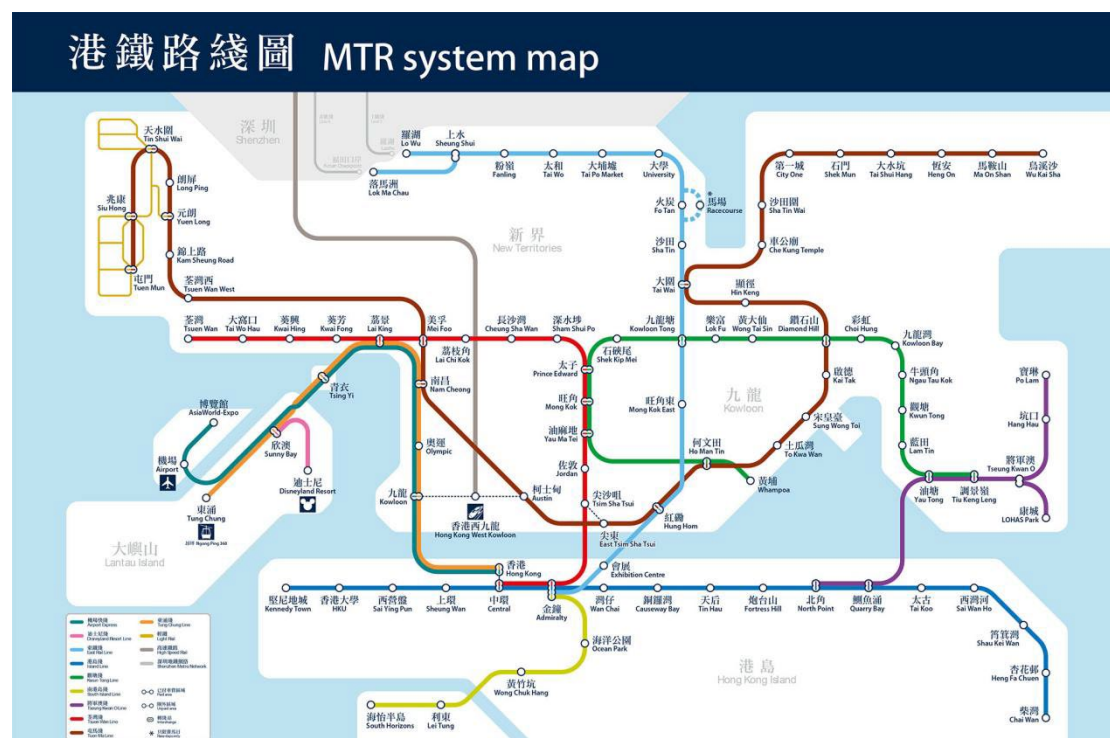
1. Islands, 2. Kwai Tsing, 3. North, 4. Sai Kung, 5. Sha Tin, 6. Tai Po, 7. Tsuen Wan, 8. Tuen Mun, 9. Yuen Long, 10. Kowloon City, 11. Kwun Tong, 12. Sham Shui Po, 13. Wong Tai Sin, 14. Yau Tsim Mong, 15. Central & Western, 16. Eastern, 17. Southern, 18. Wan Chai

Visit https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Districts_of_Hong_Kong if you are interested in learning more about the various districts in Hong Kong.

‘Location, location, location’ may sound like a cliché, but it remains the number one rule in real estate. Different people choose to reside in various places for different reasons. Visit <https://expatliving.hk/living-in-hong-kong-expats-guide-where-to-live/> for a quick overview of some popular home locations in Hong Kong. Doing your own research from the outset can set you on the right path.

Most people prefer to live near their workplace or their children’s school. How about you? Generally speaking, the closer a place is to a central business district (CBD), such as Central, Wan Chai, Causeway Bay, or Tsim Sha Tsui, the higher the cost will be. **TIP:** Living in a location further away from the CBD can be a good way to save money on accommodation.

Hong Kong is a compact city, occupying an area that is approximately 0.7 times the size of London and 1.4 times the size of New York City. Despite its small size, the city boasts efficient transportation systems that seamlessly connect most areas. If your home is not far from the Mass Transit Railway (MTR), buses, or ferries, getting around is a breeze. And time flies when you’re chatting with a stranger on the train – just don’t forget to change lines and keep your personal space bubble intact!



Most populated areas are accessible via the MTR (image source: MTR Corporation's official website)

Home is not just a place where you lay your head and hang your hat; it is the sanctuary of your heart, the centre around which your life revolves. **TIP:** When selecting a location to live, it's important to consider whether it suits your lifestyle. Ask yourself: What is the community like? Do you need a car to get around? Are there good restaurants, coffee shops, supermarkets, or grocery stores nearby? Where would you like to hang out? Is it easy to access parks, playgrounds, swimming pools, hiking trails, shopping malls, and other facilities? Do you have any other concerns?

TIP: If you're new to the city and unsure about the districts, a great starting point is to ask for advice from friends, colleagues, or a local estate agent. They can provide valuable insights into various neighbourhoods that suit your needs and preferences. It's beneficial to explore a few selected areas first to get a feel for each place before embarking on your property search.



Most neighbourhoods have at least one supermarket nearby

2. Types of Property

With an area of just 1,114 square kilometres, Hong Kong is home to over seven million people. Due to a shortage of land for residential development, vertical living has become the predominant solution, with most residents living in *apartments* or *flats* within high-rises. In fact, nearly three-quarters of the city's skyscrapers are used for housing.



High-rises dominate Hong Kong's skyline

Houses and *villas* are scarce and, therefore, very expensive, particularly those situated in upmarket areas such as the Peak and Southern District. **TIP:** Cheaper options, however, can be found in suburban areas like Sai Kung and North District. Some of them come with a garden, a swimming pool, or both.

TIP: If you're on a tight budget but don't want to compromise on living space, you may consider a *village house apartment*, which is typically around 700 square feet. A standard village house consists of three separate apartments spread across three floors: the ground floor, first floor, and second floor. The second floor, which is usually the highest level, often includes access to the rooftop directly above it. Some village houses have internal staircases connecting all the floors.



Most village houses are located in the suburbs and on outlying islands

TIP: ‘*Tong Lau*’ (唐樓), traditional walk-up buildings, offer a budget-friendly accommodation option in Hong Kong. These older buildings are typically cheaper due to their lack of modern amenities, such as proper security systems and professional building management. Potential residents should be aware of possible drawbacks, including poor lighting and maintenance in communal areas, as well as potential sanitation issues.

TIP: For stays shorter than a year, *serviced apartments* can be a practical alternative. While usually more expensive than private rentals, they offer several advantages: flexible tenancy terms, smaller security deposits, and furnished living spaces that save

you the expense and effort of purchasing furniture. Additionally, utilities and services are often included in the rent. These features can offset the higher monthly cost, making serviced apartments especially suitable for short-term residents or those seeking a more convenient living arrangement in Hong Kong.

TIP: Wanna get a great deal? Consider a so-called '*haunted house*'. Properties where suicide or murder occurred are seen as inauspicious and are shunned by many, which significantly lowers their value. Selling these homes is like swimming against the tide, as banks rarely offer mortgages for them. However, with an open mind and a dash of courage, even the most dreadful digs can become a blissful paradise. And hey, being a confident, faith-filled person can make you feel like a hero in your own horror film!

3. Property Size

You will probably come across the terms *saleable area* (SA) and *gross floor area* (GFA) when the size of a property is mentioned. Saleable area refers to the portion of a property that can be used, while gross floor area also includes a share of the common areas, bay windows, and facilities.

To foster a fairer property market, starting from January 2013, estate agents in Hong Kong have been statutorily required to provide the saleable area of a second-hand residential property to their clients in all promotional materials.



Saleable area is the usable area of a property

According to the Rating and Valuation Department, 'saleable area' is defined as:

'The floor area exclusively allocated to a residential unit including balconies, verandahs, utility platforms and other similar features but excluding common areas such as stairs, lift shafts, pipe ducts, lobbies and communal toilets. It is measured to the exterior face of the external walls and walls onto common parts or the centre of party walls. Bay windows, flat roofs, top roofs, stairhoods, cocklofts, gardens, terraces, yards, air-conditioning plant rooms, air-conditioning platforms, planters/flower boxes and car parking spaces are excluded.'

In Hong Kong, we typically use *square feet* as the unit of measurement for property size. For your reference, one square metre equals 10.764 square feet – to be exact.

Let me give you an idea of the property sizes, in saleable area, here. A decent studio or one-bedroom flat usually ranges from approximately 250 to 400 square feet. A two-bedroom apartment normally spans 400 to 600 square feet, while a three-bedroom home typically measures between 600 and 800 square feet. To illustrate just how small some properties can be, a ‘nano flat’ is defined as a diminutive living space of approximately 215 square feet or less, measuring as little as 130 square feet – too small even to swing a cat (literally)!

TIP: If you are taller than six feet (1.8 metres) and need a bed that matches your height, make sure to let your estate agent know right from the start. Many bedrooms here are smaller than you might imagine – some can only fit a bed no larger than 4 feet by 6 feet. Putting a giraffe into a rabbit hole is definitely not going to work!

4. Number of Rooms

The number of bedrooms and bathrooms you require will depend on the size of your family. To meet the needs of many small local families, two- and three-bedroom flats are the most prevalent types of homes in Hong Kong. One-bedroom and studio units are in high demand due to their affordability, resulting in limited supply, as both property investors and renters actively seek them out. Please be aware that both storage rooms and maid’s quarters are typically quite small here. If you require these spaces, it’s important to consider whether they meet your needs before making a decision.



Rooms or space: which one steals your heart?

Even when a property has the necessary rooms, the key question is: can you envision your family comfortably living there, or will they be competing for space like sardines in a tin? Not many people in Hong Kong would describe their homes as ‘spacious’; nevertheless, ensuring there’s enough room for your furniture and belongings is essential.

If a room can only fit your king-size bed, you may need extra space for a wardrobe. Some people maximise their living areas by adding built-in cabinets in the living room, while others create a raised platform in the master bedroom for storing items underneath the bed. **TIP:** Moving is the perfect opportunity to declutter. Thoughtfully organising your new home can help your life fall into place!

5. View

In this vibrant metropolis, where its scenic vistas are as diverse as the cuisines it offers, having the right view can make or break your experience. Waterfront homes feature attractive sights but come with a hefty price tag. Would you also enjoy the beauty of mountains, the tranquillity of gardens and greenery, or the lively city skyline?

A quick glance at the urban landscape reveals why many apartment dwellers struggle to avoid the sight of neighbouring buildings. Beyond the obvious privacy concerns, it can be disheartening to look out of your window and be greeted by the dreary, lifeless appearance of an old brick wall – one that clearly has no intention of blinking!



Choosing the right view offers a treat not only to your eyes but also to your emotions

6. Floor Level

For those accustomed to living in a house, moving to a high-rise apartment in Hong Kong may take some adjustment. **TIP:** Living on a higher floor can offer benefits such as better views, reduced noise, and improved air quality, provided that there is a lift.

‘If you wish to see things that are a thousand miles away, get to higher ground,’ states a famous Chinese poem. It’s undeniable that higher floors offer more expansive and impressive views; however, residing at the very top comes with its own unique challenges. **TIP:** Top-floor units are often subject to excessive heat during the summer months and are more susceptible to water leaks due to their proximity to the roof. This is why the few floors directly below the top floor are frequently considered the optimal options.

While lower-floor units may offer a more restricted view, they can still be delightful if they overlook a picturesque garden or shimmering pool. Naturally, a vista of the seaside would indeed be a true treasure. **TIP:** When choosing a floor to live on, you should also consider factors such as natural light, ambient noise, air circulation, privacy, security, and signs of pest activity. Taking the time to evaluate these aspects can enhance your chances of securing a living space that is both comfortable and enjoyable.

7. Property Orientation

When searching for a home, the orientation of a property is often overlooked, yet it can significantly impact one’s well-being and happiness. An ancient Chinese proverb carries considerable weight and insight: ‘It’s hard to buy a south-facing house even with a thousand pieces of gold.’ But what makes such homes so special?



The orientation of a house has a remarkable effect on the temperature of its rooms. A physicist has elucidated that, owing to Hong Kong’s position in the Northern Hemisphere, the sun pivots southward during winter. Consequently, a south-facing unit receives more sunlight throughout the day, making it generally warmer than its counterparts. At noon in summer, the sun attains its highest point in the sky, causing sunlight to fall almost parallel to the window panes and preventing the house from overheating. **TIP:** In essence, south-facing houses bask in cosier temperatures throughout winter and enjoy a cooler reprieve in summer.

A house facing north gets very little sunlight. It can be bitterly cold, especially when the northeast monsoon blows fiercely during winter. If you're an early riser, you might appreciate an east-facing bedroom, where the morning sun warmly greets you to start your day on a positive note. An unobstructed west-facing space welcomes the afternoon sun with open arms. If you can weather the sweltering summer heat, you'll be rewarded with a stunning sunset display

– a true spectacle for sunset chasers! **TIP:** On that note, as a complement to curtains and blinds, installing tinted window films can effectively reduce sunlight infiltration, enhance privacy, minimise glare, block harmful UV rays, and improve energy efficiency.



Sunsets are nature's way of saying, 'Stop and lift your eyes!'

Cool ocean breezes, combined with adequate ventilation, can dramatically alleviate heat levels. During Hong Kong summers, the prevailing wind typically blows from the South China Sea, making homes that face south, east, southeast, and southwest highly sought after due to the refreshing winds they receive.

A friend who lives in a southeast-facing flat enthusiastically shared with me that refreshing gusts of wind enter his home on most summer days. As a result, he rarely needs to use air conditioning, leading to two major benefits: lower electricity costs and improved health. In fact, prolonged exposure to an air-conditioned environment can do us more harm than good. From an increased chance of catching a cold to dry, irritated skin, it seems we need to give our beloved ACs a break every now and then.

8. Outdoor Space

Imagine having your own private oasis for relaxation, just beyond your living room. Even a small balcony can be a true blessing, providing a serene escape after a busy day. A gentle breeze offers a calming respite, while the versatility of the space opens up a world of possibilities: enjoy your morning coffee, grow plants, dry clothes, sunbathe, and even entertain guests – all within your outdoor sanctuary.

Most modern flats here feature balconies, though often compact in size. While terraces, patios, rooftops, and private gardens are less common, some larger estates offer communal outdoor areas and children's playgrounds. These shared spaces provide a welcome alternative for those yearning for open-air environments.

TIP: If outdoor space isn't crucial, you will have more property options.



Having a private garden in HK is a rare luxury

9. Furnishings

Some people prefer not to invest in new furniture, especially if they have recently relocated to Hong Kong and are uncertain of the length of their stay. However, most apartments on the market are either unfurnished or only partially furnished. Moreover, even when a property is furnished, the furniture may be outdated or not to your taste.

TIP: Purchasing new furniture is a piece of cake here. You can simply place an order and have it delivered to your home, even with the option for assembly service.



TIP: If you are looking for economical options, there is a wealth of second-hand furniture available online, particularly in local Facebook groups. You may even be able to find some free items if you act quickly. On another note, remember that second-hand does not always mean it's second best. Many used or unwanted items can be given a new lease of life or even serve a new purpose. 'Reduce, reuse, and recycle' has become the modern motto for sustainable living.

10. Parking Space



Due to the scarcity of land in the city, parking space is very limited and, as a result, quite costly. In fact, securing one could be a significant challenge. **TIP:** Unless you can find a place that includes parking or are willing to pay a substantial amount for a spot, it may be more practical to ‘go with the flow’ and utilise public transportation.

In Hong Kong, car ownership is not a necessity if you reside in an area with well-established public transport connections. Additionally, some buildings and estates offer bicycle parking spaces for their residents at a nominal fee or even free of charge.

11. Amenities

Life in Hong Kong is known for its demanding work culture and fast-paced lifestyle, which can often be stressful. In the midst of this bustling environment, what activities do you enjoy during your leisure time? What types of amenities or clubhouse facilities would you like to have access to?

Modern buildings commonly provide a range of amenities to cater to residents’ leisure needs, including gyms, swimming pools, reading areas, and sauna rooms. In larger estates, additional sports venues, event spaces, and barbecue areas may also be available. Depending on the policies of each estate, these amenities might be offered at no cost or for a modest fee.



Take the plunge and leave your cares behind!

Most old or standalone buildings lack a clubhouse, but public and private facilities are readily available in populated areas. Regardless of age or how hectic life gets, there are always fun ways to embrace each moment with energy and enthusiasm!

A Case in Point:

During my consultation with Jackie, she expressed a keen desire to find a property that offered a sizeable indoor swimming pool as part of its clubhouse facilities. She explained that she suffered from joint problems and therefore needed to swim regularly, regardless of the season. **TIP:** To find a home that meets your personal needs and preferences, make sure to let your estate agent know exactly what you're looking for.

12. Proximity to Schools

Many Hong Kong families move across districts to secure their children's education in prestigious, subsidised schools. Districts such as Central and Western, Wan Chai, and Kowloon City (which includes Kowloon Tong and Ho Man Tin) have schools with more renowned reputations compared to other areas. **TIP:** For families looking to maximise their child's chances of admission to a desired school, residing within the same district is a strategic move that can make a significant difference.

13. Children's Play Areas

TIP: If you have children, finding a property that offers opportunities for play, exercise, and socialising is likely a high priority.

Although parks and playgrounds are plentiful in Hong Kong, they may not be easily accessible from every estate or building. Smaller complexes tend to have indoor playgrounds, whereas larger apartment buildings often include both indoor and outdoor play areas. Some well-designed swimming pools also feature fun and exciting amenities for kids!



Outdoor play is vital for children's development

14. Keeping Pets

While some housing developments might not permit dogs, cats are generally allowed. **TIP:** Be transparent with your estate agent about your pets. Even if an estate is designated as pet-friendly, individual landlords, particularly those of newly constructed flats, may refuse to allow pets due to concerns about odours or potential property damage.



Do your furry friends need a furever home?

With the rising popularity of all kinds of pets, the city has blossomed into a little animal kingdom, boasting a surge of dog parks, pet-friendly caf  s, and even fancy pet hotels – all designed to pamper our beloved companions!

15. Property Condition

Lastly, while the aesthetic appeal of a property can be a real showstopper when choosing a home, savvy buyers and renters know how to dig a little deeper. After all, we want beauty that goes beyond just a pretty face! **TIP:** When you're inspecting a property, it's wise to engage all your senses (but don't taste anything!) and intellectual faculties. Keep in mind that true virtues always lie beneath the surface, so make sure it's not just an alluring fa  ade hiding future surprises.



Where little details can reveal big problems!

See: Examine Carefully

What you see is often what you'll get. Inspect closely for any dirty marks or faulty parts. Pay attention to recent renovations and cosmetic improvements, ensuring they are of high quality and free of imperfections. Check if the paint job has been done properly. Look for hairline cracks, nail holes, or peeling paint on the walls.

Search for indications of water leaks, particularly around sinks, baths, or shower trays. See if the sealant appears mouldy. Evaluate appliances to determine if they require repair, replacement, or just cleaning.



Sunlit beauty embraces beaming serenity

Living in a well-lit flat with large windows can lift our spirits, enhance our well-being, and help us save energy. The influx of invigorating natural light creates a warm and inviting atmosphere, making the space feel more open and connected to the outdoors. It's also important to assess whether artificial lighting can complement the daylight.

TIP: The best time to check for water leaks is immediately after a typhoon with heavy rainfall. After all, adversity is the acid test of strength and character – it applies to both people and properties.

Hear: Listen Attentively

Be attentive to sounds from nearby streets, traffic, or construction sites. Listen for noises from neighbours, such as crying babies or barking dogs. Evaluate the volume level of the air conditioner, particularly if it's a window unit. Consider the possibility of intermittent noise during the building's renovation.



Traffic is a major source of noise and pollution

Both incessant noise and complete silence can drive us mad. A harmonious environment promotes health and well-being. It might be a positive sign if you find a place where you can listen to the soothing rhythm of ocean waves or enjoy an uplifting performance from a feathered choir. Wise men say, 'If the birds keep singing sweetly to you, then you must be so charming that they can't help falling in love with you!'

TIP: Conduct a sound inspection on a weekday (before 5 pm and avoiding lunchtime) to get an accurate assessment of the area's noise levels. Most renovation and construction work that produces loud noise ceases on weekends and public holidays.

Smell: Sniff out the Truth

Be mindful of any unusual odours or stuffy air, as these can suggest underlying issues like dampness or poor ventilation. Try to detect if the adjacent neighbour is a smoker by any lingering tobacco smells, which can affect the air quality in the area.

Determine if air fresheners have been used to mask unpleasant scents; while a fragrant aroma is inviting, heavy use may signal an attempt to cover up persistent problems.



Home is where the scent is! A lovely fragrance makes your space feel more welcoming.

Take note of the pungent smell of fresh paint, which may point to recent renovations. While this could imply improvements, it might also mean that the property has been covered up to hide other issues.

Additionally, pay attention to kitchen and bathroom smells. Lingering food odours or musty scents can indicate cleanliness issues. Indeed, using your sense of smell can reveal a lot about a property. It certainly helps to be a little bit ‘nosy’ with your nose.

Touch: Feel Your Way Around

When you arrive at the right place, it often feels like home. The sense of comfort and familiarity we experience is intricately linked to our surroundings, particularly through the sensation of touch.

- Can you feel a refreshing breeze when the windows are open? A simple, well-ventilated flat is preferable to a gorgeous house adorned with gold and silver.
- Does the apartment get too hot in the morning or afternoon? Can the air conditioner cool the room quickly?
- Do all doors and windows close properly? Are there any loose handles or parts around?
- Assess the comfort level of the sofa or mattress, if provided. Do they offer good support?

Remember, if you're not interested in the place or if someone still lives there, refrain from touching anything without permission.

Speak: Ask the Right Questions

Communication is key when it comes to understanding a property's potential. **TIP:** Don't be afraid to ask questions, as they can reveal valuable information that might otherwise remain hidden. Consider inquiring about:

- Will the furniture stay or go? This can impact your moving plans and budget.
- Are there any upcoming developments in front of the building that may block the view? This could lower the property's attractiveness and its value.
- Where should I dispose of rubbish and recycle unwanted items?
- Have there been any serious problems in the past, such as water damage or pest infestations?

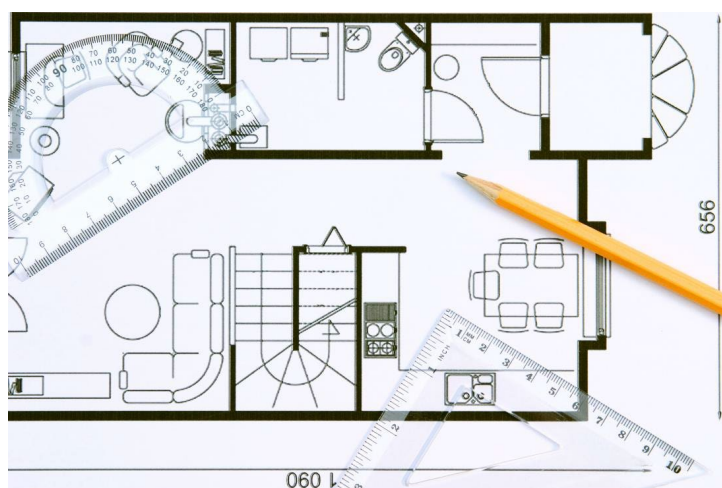
When in doubt, don't hesitate to ask. Unearthing answers to important questions can safeguard you from unexpected issues down the road. And as the saying goes, 'better safe than sorry' – especially when it comes to your own living space!

Think: Evaluate Thoroughly

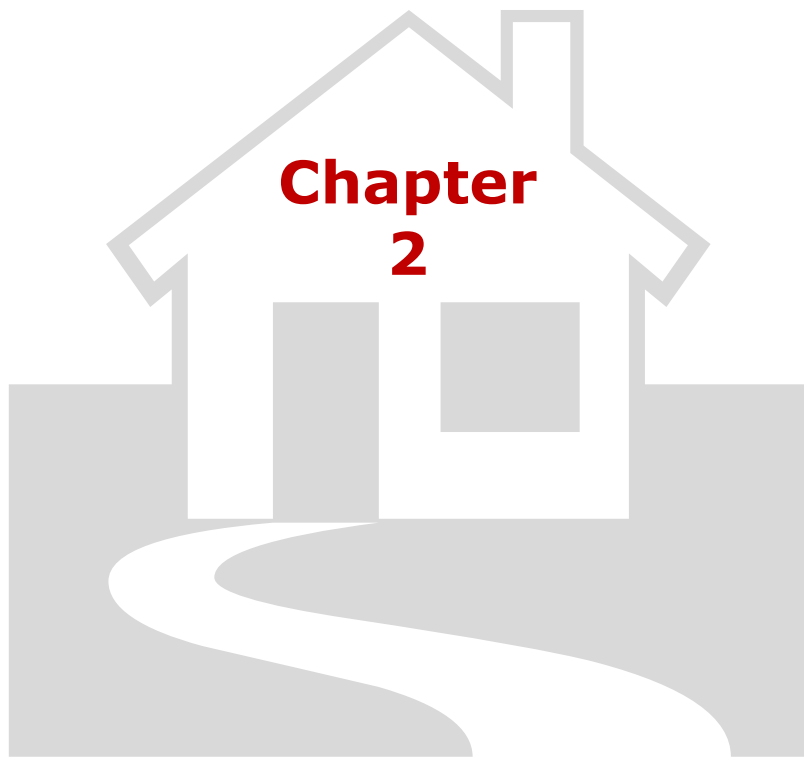
When assessing a property, it's crucial to think critically and evaluate thoroughly. Even when you ask the right questions, you may not always receive honest or complete answers. This is why it's essential to dig deeper and consider the implications of what you observe.

- Why are there different shades of paint on the same wall?
- Could the carpet near the window be concealing a damp floor?
- Might the apartment be too hot in summer or too cold in winter due to its location and insulation?
- What is the reasoning behind the alterations?
- Why is there wallpaper on only one wall? Could it be used to cover up damage or conceal an illegal structure?
- Have there been any recent repairs or renovations that could affect the property's condition?

It's important to conduct a thorough examination of the property. **TIP:** Review the floor plan and records from the Land Registry for clues about past modifications and ownership history. You don't need the brain of Sherlock Holmes to uncover potential problems; a keen eye and a questioning mind will suffice.



Load-bearing walls, marked on the floor plan, shouldn't be removed



'You will find that everything in life exacts a price, and you will have to decide whether the price is worth the prize.'

— Sam Nunn

Be Mindful: Evaluating Your Financial Commitments



We cannot be good stewards of life if we fail to be good stewards of money. Since there is a myriad of costs associated with acquiring a home and living a decent life, careful budgeting is essential. You should have a good estimate of your monthly outgoings as well as the one-off expenses.

Monthly Outgoings

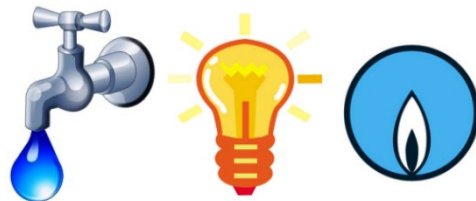
The *rent* is the biggest chunk of your outgoings when getting a home. **TIP:** As a rule of thumb, you're advised not to spend more than half of your monthly income on rent. Of course, you should also take into account your daily expenses: food, transportation, clothing, entertainment, and the like. What's more, providing education for your child or hiring a domestic helper will add to your monthly expenditure. You might also want to stash away a little cash each month – think of it as your financial safety net or a treasure chest for future adventures!

TIP: You can easily learn about home prices in different districts by conducting a property search at www.squarefoot.com.hk/en or www.spacious.hk/en/hong-kong. More property search websites can be found at www.oikos.hk/links. One thing to bear in mind, though, is that properties in Hong Kong come and go very quickly; the units may have already been taken by the time you come across them. **TIP:** If you want to find out the latest transaction prices of properties in a particular district, estate, or building, <https://hk.centanet.com/findproperty/en/list/transaction> is a reliable source to refer to.

The rent usually includes rates, Government rent, and the management fee. However, you are responsible for paying utilities such as water, electricity, and gas. Keep in mind that deposits are required to open these utility accounts. As a tenant, you'll need to settle these deposits and consumption charges when you receive the first bills.

Utility charges for water and gas in Hong Kong are typically much lower than those in Western countries. As expected, you will receive a higher electricity bill if you use air conditioning more frequently in the summer.

Furthermore, if you require broadband internet access and Wi-Fi services at home, you can sign up for a plan with a local internet service provider. If desired, you may also apply for a fixed telephone line.



Do you need more than just the basics?

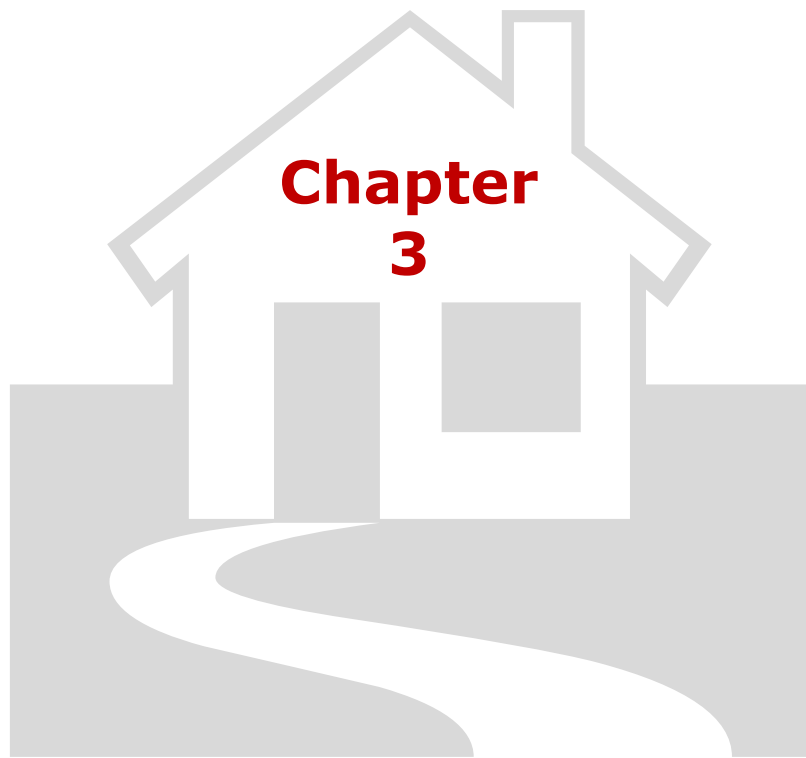
One-off Expenses

- Security deposit: Two months' rent (usually refundable at the end of the tenancy)
- Stamp duty: Usually about 3% of the monthly rent
- Agent commission: Half a month's rent (negotiable)

(The three fees mentioned above should be paid upon signing the formal *Tenancy Agreement*. More details can be found on page 28.)

- Buying furniture and other household items, or the removal of them
- Renovation, professional cleaning, and pest control before moving in (if needed)
- Changing the main door lock for better security (optional)
- Home insurance (optional, but recommended for peace of mind)
- A car or any other items that you may need

By now, you should have a clearer picture of what your home in Hong Kong entails, including the costs and associated expenses. This understanding will empower you to budget effectively and prepare for any unexpected costs that may arise. Remember, being financially savvy today can pave the way for a more comfortable tomorrow!



‘As the water shapes itself to the vessel that contains it, so a wise man adapts himself to circumstances.’

—Confucius

Be *Adaptable*: Adjusting Plans in a Dynamic Market

Searching for the right home is akin to pursuing other significant life goals. It's a journey filled with excitement, anticipation, and sometimes unexpected challenges. Don't be surprised if you encounter a bumpy ride at some point. As someone aptly said, 'We cannot direct the wind, but we can adjust the sails.' Adaptability is an indispensable quality that enables us to navigate the ever-changing landscape of today's housing market.

Visualise the Reality

While visualising a mountaintop house with a panoramic sea view, an extensive garden, and top-of-the-line facilities may tantalise your fantasies, the truth is that unless you are extremely wealthy, your dream home will likely remain just that – a dream. Experienced estate agents will tell you that perfect properties are scarce; if they do exist, they tend to be snapped up quickly.



Can you find your *dream home* in the real world?

TIP: If you can't find a home that ticks all the boxes, focus on your must-haves and be willing to compromise on the nice-to-haves. It's better to settle for a place that is eighty per cent okay than to chase an unrealistic dream day after day. After all, every home has its individual character and potential; sometimes it just takes a little imagination to see it.

Set Your Priorities

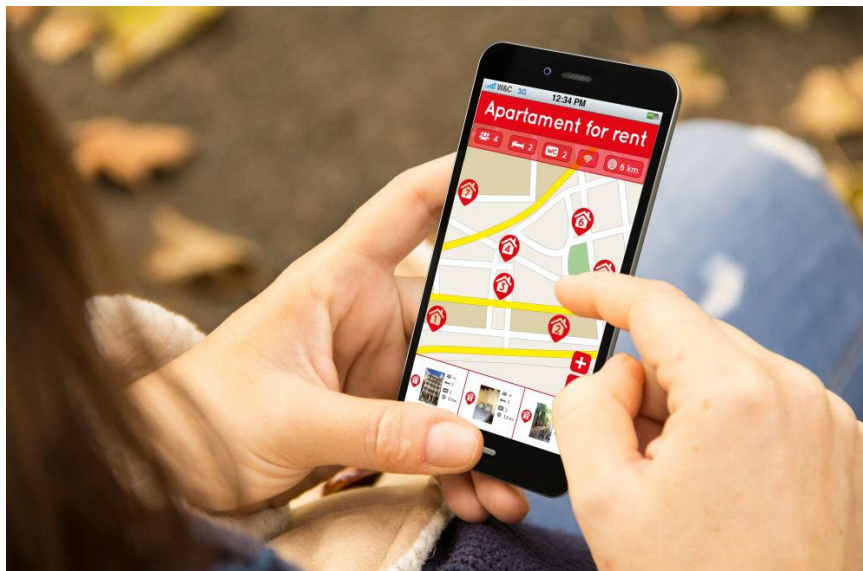
TIP: Writing down all your requirements is essential, but avoid setting them in stone.

While it's important to have a clear vision of what you want, being too rigid can limit your options. Consider creating a tiered list of needs to help prioritise your home search:

- **Must-Haves:** Non-negotiable features that are essential for your lifestyle.
- **Nice-to-Haves:** Additional features that would enhance your living experience but are not critical.
- **Future Aspirations:** Features you might want in the future but can live without for now.

Be Open to New Areas

TIP: A good way to increase the likelihood of finding a suitable place is to widen the search area. Being open to suggestions from friends and estate agents can expand your horizons. A perfect home may be waiting for you somewhere you've never thought of – why not give it a try?



Widening the search area can increase the chance of finding a suitable apartment

Additionally, exploring different neighbourhoods or areas may offer better value, amenities, or other desirable features. Sometimes moving slightly away from popular locations can lead to discovering hidden treasures that fit your criteria perfectly.

Adjust Your Budget

TIP: Sometimes, you may need to increase your budget to get what you really want.

The key is to be adaptable and pragmatic – take a different route when obstacles arise. In addition to adjusting your expectations regarding features and location, keeping an open mind about property types can enhance your search. Apartments, village houses, or even properties in walk-up buildings can offer more value than luxurious houses.

Consider Alternative Living Arrangements

Exploring alternative living arrangements can be beneficial, especially if you're on a tight budget. **TIP:** Co-living or shared spaces could provide community benefits while meeting your housing needs. These options often come with shared amenities that make life more convenient and affordable.

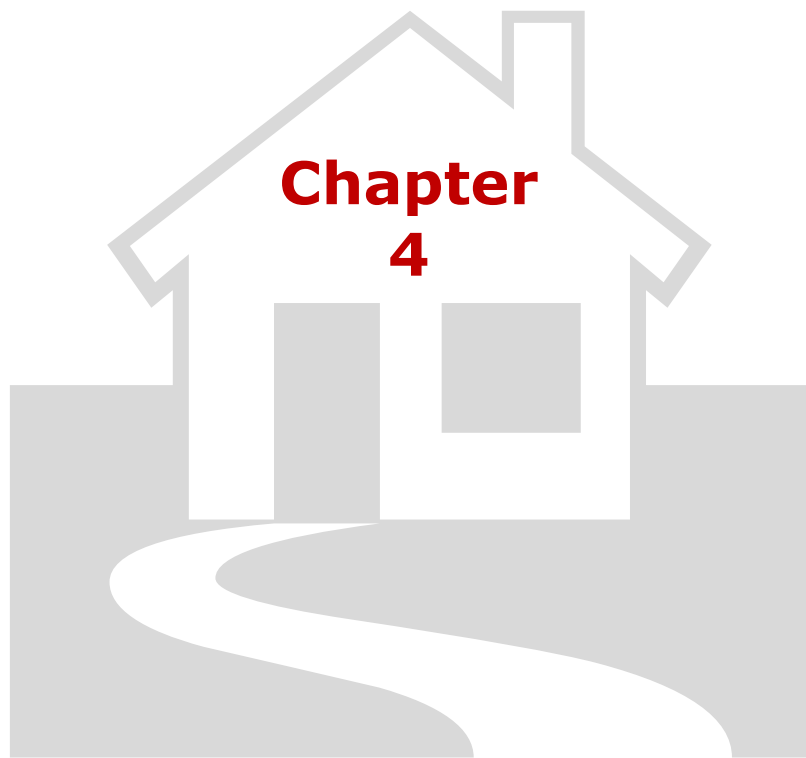
Finding the right home is often about balancing dreams with reality. By embracing adaptability, maintaining flexibility in your requirements, expanding your search area, budgeting wisely, and keeping an open mind about property types, you can enhance your chances of finding a place that feels like home. Remember that every obstacle is an opportunity for growth and discovery. Your perfect home may not be too far across the horizon – sometimes it just takes a little creativity and persistence to find it!

A Case in Point:

Cathy, a British woman, was searching for a home in Sheung Wan for herself and her tall son. Initially, her plan was to find a furnished flat, as she intended to leave Hong Kong within a year or so. However, the furnished options available did not meet her standards.

After an extensive search, Cathy eventually found a well-maintained and pleasant unit that suited her needs, including a generously sized second bedroom for her son. Although the flat was unfurnished, she recognised it as the best option available and decided to take it.

Despite the inconvenience of having to purchase furniture, Cathy appreciated the quality of the property and adjusted her initial expectations to secure a suitable residence.



‘Success is where preparation and opportunity meet.’

— Bobby Unser

Be Ready: Preparing for Effective Property Viewings

As Benjamin Franklin wisely stated, ‘If you fail to plan, you are planning to fail.’ This sentiment is particularly relevant to the often-challenging process of house hunting. Many individuals miss out on their dream homes due to a lack of preparation. To secure a property in Hong Kong, you must first enter into a *Provisional Tenancy Agreement* with the landlord. Here are the three essential requirements:



1. **Valid Identification:** You need a valid ID, such as your *HKID* or *passport*, to verify your identity.
2. **Proof of Employment and Income:** This can be demonstrated through your *employment letter* or *contract*, or your last three months’ *payslips*. Some landlords may also request to see your name card or staff badge to confirm your employment, especially if they are particularly diligent in their screening process.
3. **Initial Deposit:** An initial deposit, typically equivalent to one month’s rent, is required. This deposit is usually paid by cheque or cash, although some landlords may accept payment via bank transfer. If you need to make a telegraphic transfer, please allow a few days for the funds to clear, provided the landlord is willing to wait.

TIP: When viewing a property, remember to bring your documents and chequebook. If you don’t have a chequebook, bring your ATM card for easy access to cash. For safety reasons, avoid carrying large amounts of cash unless you’re a kung fu expert (I’m more of a Wing Chun novice – ha ha!). Important reminder: do not give or transfer money to the landlord before the paperwork is done.

TIP: A nice place at a reasonable price won’t stay on the market for long. If you find the perfect home and have your ducks in a row, you’ll have the upper hand over other potential tenants.

Even if you've signed a preliminary agreement with the landlord, don't count your chickens before they hatch – either party could pull out of the deal with appropriate compensation. Before the property handover, both parties must finalise the transaction by signing a formal Tenancy Agreement. At that time, you will need to pay:

1. The *balance of the two-month security deposit* (equivalent to one additional month) plus *one month's rent in advance* to the landlord.

TIP: If you are a newcomer with limited accessible funds, RentSmart Rental Services Limited may lend you a hand. Their service allows you to pay your rental deposit and rent using credit cards, which can help ease your cash flow. RentSmart also offers the option to split larger payments across multiple credit cards if needed. For more information, please visit their website at www.rentsmart.com.hk/en-hk.

2. A small *stamp duty*, which is usually about 3% of the monthly rent, to the Hong Kong SAR Government.
3. An *agent commission* of half a month's rent (negotiable).

So, before signing on the dotted line, make sure your wallet is ready to tango. Financial preparedness is the name of the game!



Don't rush into signing; give that tenancy agreement a friendly read first!

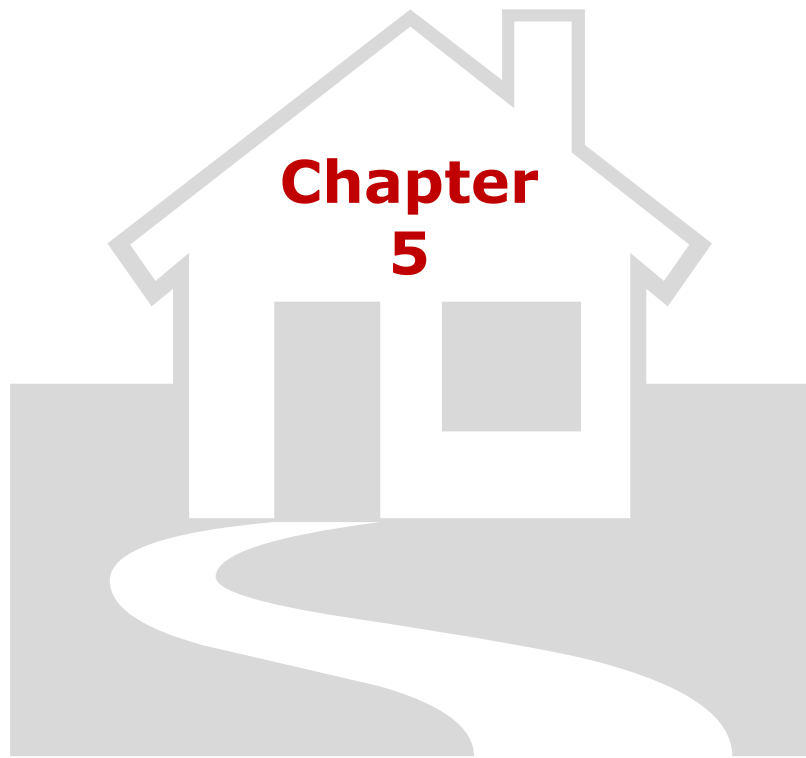
In addition to the important points mentioned above, there are a few other things you should pay attention to when inspecting properties:

- **TIP:** Wear comfortable clothing and shoes. Avoid slippers and high heels, as you may need to walk for several hours to view multiple properties in different districts. When visiting an occupied property, it is both customary and courteous to remove your shoes at the door, demonstrating respect for the homeowner's space and cleanliness.
- **TIP:** Don't start your viewing tour on an empty stomach. It's a good idea to grab a bite beforehand, as you'll need plenty of energy to move quickly and assess your options. **TIP:** It's also prudent to bring some water, especially on hot and sunny days. While Hong Kong has numerous convenience stores and vending machines scattered throughout the city, they may not be readily accessible in every area you explore while searching for a home.
- What else should you bring? **TIP:** Consider taking a brolly for rain or shade, a compass for navigation, a tape measure for checking dimensions, and a notebook or smartphone for jotting down notes and taking photos. Very few people have a truly photographic memory, so mixing things up could lead to a great mess-up!



Compass and tape measure: invaluable tools for property inspection

So don't set off on your home-hunting adventure empty-handed, or you might return heavy-hearted. Equip yourself with the right essentials, and with proper preparation, you could discover your dream home, complete the paperwork, and even collect the keys – all in the same day!



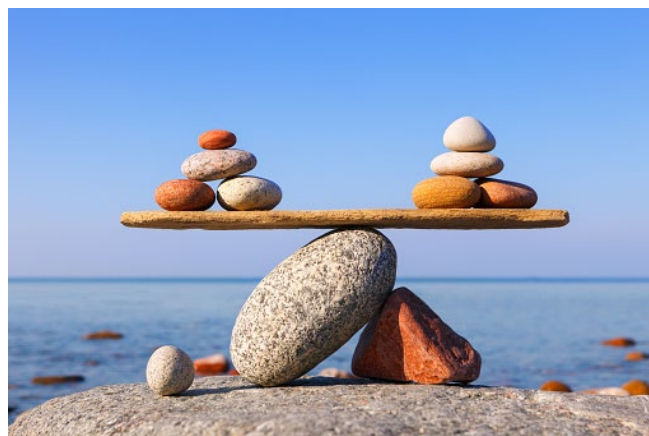
'Strategy requires thought, tactics require observation.'

— Max Euwe

Be *Tactical*: Negotiating with Landlords

Sun Tzu, the famous Chinese military strategist, wrote in his classic work *The Art of War*, ‘To know one’s own strength and the enemy’s is the sure way to victory.’ In rental negotiations, understanding the opposing interests of landlords and tenants can pave the way for a mutually beneficial agreement.

The amount of rent, in particular, often takes centre stage in the negotiation process. The landlord aims to maximise their return on investment by charging the highest possible rent, while you seek to pay the lowest within your budget. To secure a fair deal, consider asking the following questions:



Negotiation is the art of balancing the interests of two parties

1. What are the current market rates for similar properties?

Usually, landlords in Hong Kong intentionally set an *asking price* higher than the market value of the property. **TIP:** Knowing the recent transaction prices of similar properties can help you make a wise and strategic offer.

TIP: I always suggest to my clients that they make an offer slightly lower than the market price. If the landlord is desperate or considers you a stellar tenant, they may be willing to accept a lower rent. If not, you still have some room to negotiate for a reasonable price.

After all, most landlords want to have a say in the deal, so they tend not to accept the first offer from a client unless it’s very attractive. **TIP:** Avoid revealing your true bottom line to the landlord unless it is absolutely necessary. Keeping your cards close to your chest can give you the upper hand in negotiations.

TIP: The room for negotiation is usually around 3 to 7 per cent, although certain landlords adopt a fixed-price policy. If a price seems too good to be true, it probably is. Some property listings may boast unbelievably low prices. That could either be genuine rock-bottom prices or just fake promotions from unscrupulous agents. Be cautious of the old bait-and-switch tactics!

TIP: Having a second option (and ideally a third) can help ease your mind and give you an edge over the landlord during the negotiation process. If Plan A doesn't work out, you may still put Plan B or C into action.

2. How long has the property been on the market?

TIP: If a property has been vacant for a considerable period, such as over one or two months, the landlord may be more open to negotiation and willing to accept a lower offer. An empty unit costs them money with every passing day. On the flip side, a property that has just hit the market is as fresh as a daisy, and the landlord is unlikely to budge on price.



3. How soon can I start the lease?

TIP: The sooner you can start the lease, the greater your bargaining power will be. Timing is crucial in securing a property. The best time to view properties is generally one to four weeks prior to your desired move-in date.



Commencing your home search more than a month in advance is unnecessary unless you are seeking a rare or special property. Most landlords are unlikely to wait long for a tenant to start paying rent, particularly during the peak rental season, which typically runs from May to August.

TIP: Most landlords appreciate a short vacancy and may consider offering a rent-free period of approximately seven days. This arrangement expedites the leasing process



for the landlord, while the tenant enjoys a brief respite from rental expenses. Since the property is vacant, the landlord has little to lose. Therefore, negotiating this period with a prompt commencement date can lead to a win-win agreement for both parties.

4. What other types of requests can or should I make along with an offer?

Properties are like people; they are seldom perfect. Most flaws and defects in a property can be fixed in one way or another. If you are paying a fair rent to the landlord, it is reasonable to expect that the property will be in good condition upon handover.

TIP: When making an offer, you can leverage this opportunity to request certain repairs, replacements, or improvements. The landlord probably won't give you a hot tub, but they might:

- Repair or replace broken or worn appliances or items.
- Repaint walls if they are excessively dirty.
- Polish the floor if it is severely scratched.
- Remove or provide you with some furniture.
- Install curtain rails and curtains (or blinds).
- Clean the apartment and appliances.



Regular servicing boosts AC performance

Being proactive and open about your needs can lead to more favourable outcomes. If you don't speak up, you never know what's possible. **TIP:** Moreover, putting your requests in writing avoids misunderstandings and disputes. Clear communication is like a winning recipe, helping everyone get the right ingredients for achievement!

5. How can I secure a good bargain?

Put yourself in the landlord's shoes and consider using one or more of these commonly employed tactics (it may help to discuss them with your agent first):



- **TIP:** Offer a year's or half a year's rent upfront, particularly if you are unable or unwilling to disclose your employment contract or financial documents. The landlord may provide a small discount for an advance lump sum payment. However, bear in mind that this approach involves certain risks if the property becomes uninhabitable due to unexpected circumstances, such as natural disasters or other unforeseen events.
- **TIP:** Begin the lease on a date that aligns with the landlord's schedule or at the earliest opportunity, provided that the property is ready for handover.
- **TIP:** Avoid overwhelming the landlord with excessive requests. Busy landlords may be more inclined to accept a lower rent or offer a longer rent-free period if it means they don't have to deal with extensive repairs or renovations. Therefore, it helps to prioritise your requests and focus only on those that are essential.
- **TIP:** Highlight your strengths as a prospective tenant. If possible, obtain a reference letter from your previous landlord or a certificate verifying your punctuality in rent payments, your harmonious relationship with neighbours, and the responsible manner in which you maintained the property. Presenting a reliable image can build trust and increase your appeal as a tenant.
- **TIP:** Be patient, as time can be an invaluable tool in negotiations. If your offer is an absolute no or a resounding yes, the landlord will usually respond promptly. However, if you haven't heard back after a reasonable amount of time, don't worry; it could be a good sign. The landlord may require time to consider your offer, assess the feasibility of fulfilling your requests, and gather estimates for any necessary work. Alternatively, the lack of immediate response could be due to other factors. Remember, a delay is not necessarily a denial.

Showing your enthusiasm for a property is a positive signal, but appearing overly eager can put you at a disadvantage. **TIP:** Even if you feel desperate, try to stay composed and rational; a hungry fish is easily caught. Allowing sufficient time for effective communication can lead to better outcomes.

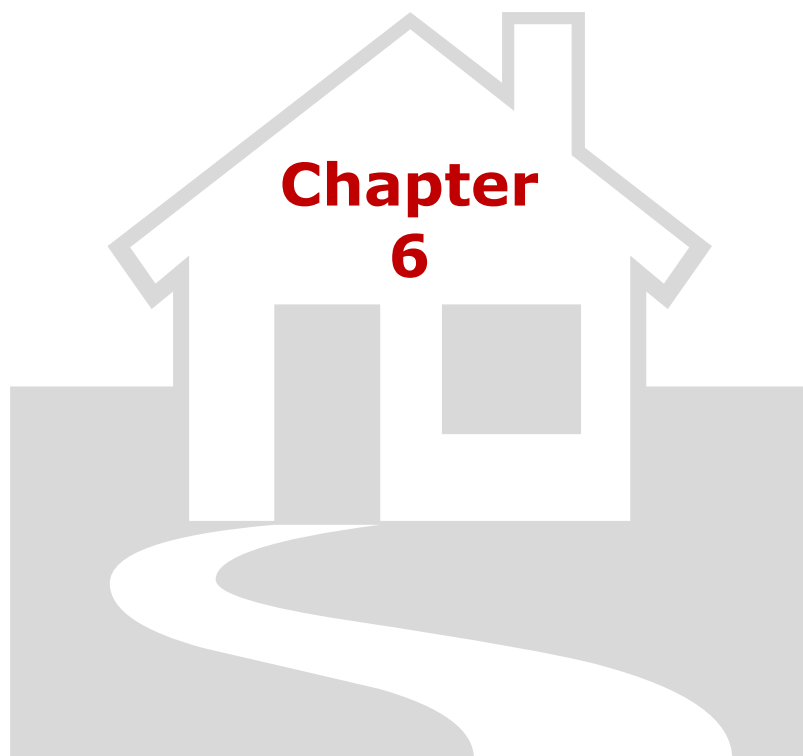
- Negotiate strategically. Treat negotiations like a game of tug of war, where every move matters. **TIP:** Teaming up with a skilled agent who genuinely acts in your best interests can provide you with a significant advantage. I will delve into this in the next bonus chapter.

By leveraging these strategies, you can enhance your chances of securing a favourable rental agreement while cultivating a positive relationship with your landlord.

To summarise all the house-hunting tips discussed so far in a nutshell, remember to be SMART:

- **Specific:** Have a clear picture of what you're looking for.
- **Mindful:** Be aware of all the costs involved.
- **Adaptable:** Remain flexible and open to new possibilities.
- **Ready:** Prepare all necessary documents and resources beforehand.
- **Tactical:** Approach negotiations with strategy and diplomacy.





'I'm courageous enough to know I can accomplish great things. I'm humble enough to know when to ask for help.'

— Katrina Mayer

Selecting and Collaborating with Estate Agents

When it comes to successful house hunting, a reliable estate agent can be your most valuable partner. *A Guide to Tenancy*, published by the Estate Agents Authority (EAA), states:

‘Licensed estate agents have professional knowledge in property transactions and are regulated by the EAA. Members of the public may consider appointing them for better protection. If one chooses not to appoint a licensed estate agent but to seek or list a property by oneself or via an online platform, he/she should be extra careful and seek professional advice when necessary.’

Finding an estate agent in Hong Kong is quite easy, as there are around 40,000 licensed agents (although some may be inactive). However, it’s crucial to work with someone who can guide you smoothly through the process. Therefore, let’s consider the following points:

1. **TIP:** First and foremost, it’s essential to find an agent with whom you can communicate effectively and efficiently. While all licensed agents must meet certain educational requirements, not all possess sufficient English skills, let alone proficiency in other languages. Reaching out to a few selected agents can help you determine who you feel comfortable working with. **TIP:** It’s advisable to keep a record of all your communications with the agents for future reference.

TIP: It’s highly beneficial to work with an agent who is also fluent in Cantonese, with proficiency in Putonghua being a plus. As most landlords in Hong Kong are either local residents or from Mainland China, a multilingual agent can effectively bridge the communication gap, facilitating smooth and efficient negotiations.



‘Hey, do you understand what I’m beaking?’

2. **TIP:** Consider working with an agent or agents who specialise in the district where you are looking for a home. Experienced agents know the area, landlords, and their properties well. Please be aware that these ‘district-based’ agents usually represent and act for both the vendor/landlord and the buyer/tenant (i.e., dual agency). Consequently, there may be a conflict of interest.

3. **TIP:** Appointing an agent who is familiar with and has an extensive network across various districts is a wise move. Representing and acting solely on your behalf (i.e., single agency), a ‘cross-district’ agent is more likely to prioritise your best interests throughout the entire process. With the freedom to collaborate with other district-based agents, they may also be able to provide you with a wider range of property options.

4. **TIP:** Communicate your budget range to your agent (sharing your absolute maximum helps) along with clear specifications. Are you looking for a downtown abode where you can soak in the vibrancy of the city, or a tranquil haven nestled in a more remote area? Do you prefer an open kitchen or a closed one? Would you like a bathtub or a shower stall (most bathrooms here rarely include both)? What key features do you want on your wish list?



5. **TIP:** Gather property details, pictures, and videos from your agent prior to scheduling viewings. This allows you to filter out unsuitable properties, helping your agent better understand your preferences and saving you time by avoiding unnecessary trips.

However, photos and videos, especially those taken some time ago, don’t always do the real thing justice and could be misleading. It’s like trying to judge a book by its attractive cover, only to discover that the content isn’t all it’s cracked up to be. Therefore, it’s prudent to view a property in person before signing any agreements.

6. **TIP:** Be punctual, or even better, arrive 15 to 30 minutes early for viewings. Use this time to explore the surrounding neighbourhood and assess its amenities, such as cafés, parks, and supermarkets. If you're running late or need to reschedule a viewing, inform your agent promptly so they can notify the landlords or existing tenants and adjust appointments as necessary.

TIP: Viewing properties during the week can have its perks. You'll likely face less competition from other home seekers on weekdays, and most agents have more availability then. This can give you an edge in your quest for the perfect place; after all, who wouldn't want to be the early bird snagging the cosiest flat?

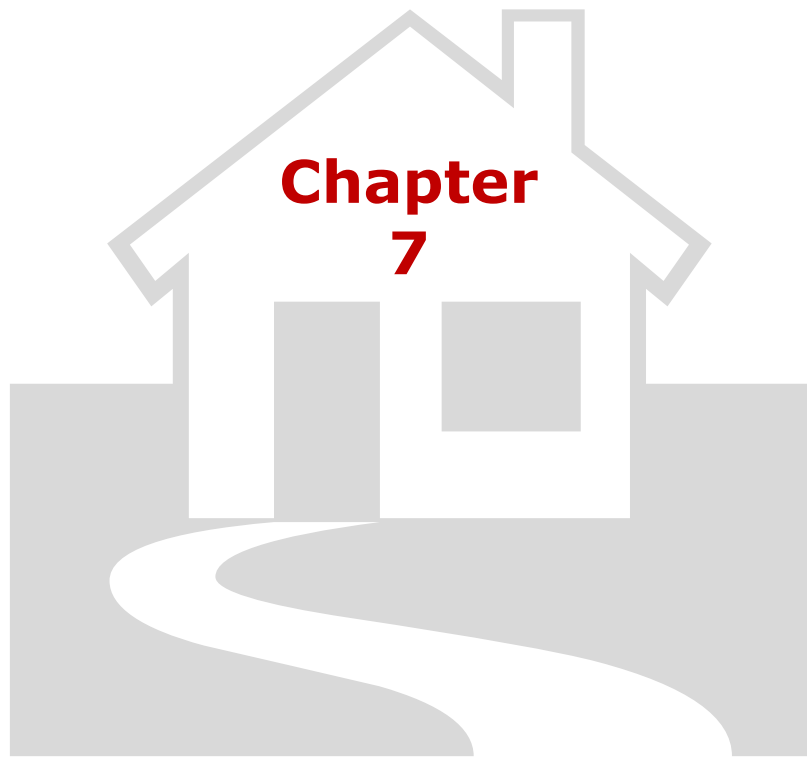
7. **TIP:** Evaluate an agent's professionalism and integrity by asking questions, particularly about their opinions on a property. Some agents may focus solely on highlighting the positives when trying to close a deal quickly, which can leave you unaware of potential downsides or hidden issues. A trustworthy agent will provide a balanced assessment of both the pros and cons, allowing you to make an informed decision.



On another note, you can verify an agent's licence status and disciplinary history by visiting www.eaa.org.hk/en-us/licence-search. This information is crucial to ensure that the agent you choose is qualified and maintains a good standing in the industry.

8. **TIP:** As the saying goes, 'You catch more flies with honey than with vinegar.' Treat your agent with courtesy and kindness, and you're likely to receive the same in return. A good relationship with your agent doesn't end after a successful deal; they may assist you in setting up utilities, act as a liaison between you and the landlord, and offer professional advice when needed. A little kindness goes a long way in ensuring a positive experience during and after your home hunt.

My final words: be SMART in your property search, work with a reliable estate agent, find a home that sparks joy, explore the lively sights and sounds of the city, build meaningful connections, and make every moment count during your time here!



‘Seek first to understand, then to be understood.’

— Stephen Covey

Understanding Tenant Obligations

Developing a healthy, long-term relationship with your landlord is crucial, as it can make all the difference when issues arise. After all, a tenant-landlord partnership should be a win-win situation for both parties.



TIP: The ‘Golden Rule of Tenancy’ is simple: Treat your landlord the way you want to be treated. Here’s some friendly advice:

1. **TIP:** Always pay your rent and utility bills on time. If you fail to comply with the former, you could face a lawsuit and eviction. Neglecting the latter for an extended period may result in the termination of your power and water services. You wouldn’t want to come home to sour milk or only be able to take a dry shower, would you? Your credit profile is as vital as your favourite pair of socks, so don’t let it wear thin.

TIP: When rent payments get sticky, don’t play hide-and-seek with your landlord. Speak up; a stitch in time saves nine! You can propose a payment plan that includes interest as a gesture of goodwill; however, this should only be considered a last resort. A compassionate landlord may agree to a delayed payment, but remember that they have financial obligations to meet too, such as their own rent, mortgage, and bills. Additionally, the security deposit should not be used to offset rent payments, as it’s like poking a bear with a stick – you won’t like the reaction!

TIP: To ensure timely rent payments, consider setting up a standing instruction at your bank (typically free if done online). This provides peace of mind for both you and your landlord. **TIP:** Implementing bill payments through autopay is also a smart move that can save you time and help you avoid late fees.

2. **TIP:** Maintain the property in a clean and good condition, treating all furnishings and appliances as if they were your own. Remember that your landlord has the right to deduct money from your security deposit to cover the costs of repairs or restoration of the property to its original condition. In such cases, you will only receive the remaining deposit after the repair work has been completed.
3. **TIP:** To ensure a smooth transition into your new rental property, it is advisable to conduct a thorough inspection immediately after receiving the keys, preferably before moving in your belongings.

This inspection should cover all aspects of the property, including doors, windows, floors, walls, ceilings, pipes, drains, cables, appliances, and any other relevant features. In Hong Kong, landlords are not obligated to provide tenants with a move-in checklist; therefore, you might consider hiring a professional building inspector for a comprehensive assessment.



TIP: Creating a detailed list of all items needing your landlord's attention can save you the hassle of playing the request game repeatedly. As the saying goes, 'a picture is worth a thousand words'; accompanying this list with photos is like bringing dessert to a potluck – it adds that extra touch that makes your case both sweeter and stronger. And keep in mind, the squeaky wheel gets the grease, so don't hesitate to give your landlord a friendly nudge or two when following up on your concerns!

4. **TIP:** Open communication and respect are essential for a positive relationship with your landlord. When you require assistance, such as a repair or a rental receipt, please make your requests politely and with sufficient notice for your landlord to attend to them. This demonstrates consideration for their schedule, fostering a cooperative environment that benefits both parties in the long run.
5. **TIP:** Avoid pestering your landlord with minor issues like light bulb changes or small touch-ups. Learning to be handy is as delightful as candy! Not only does this save your landlord's time for bigger problems, but it also encourages a more amicable partnership.



DIY made easy with tool-borrowing services

While being SMART is the key to renting your perfect place in Hong Kong, a stellar tenant holds the keys to landlord heaven. They'll jump through hoops to keep you around, making lease renewals a breeze. Good tenants are worth their weight in gold!

A Case in Point:

Steve, a native English teacher, had been renting a flat in Kowloon for over three years. One day, his landlady Anna visited to inspect the property and found it clean and well-maintained. However, she noticed that the sofa was worn out and one of the air conditioners was noisy. Without Steve needing to ask, Anna promptly offered to buy him a new sofa and air conditioner while also helping him repair a few other items.

Anna told me that Steve's punctual rent payments and trouble-free tenancy made her more than happy to lend him a hand. She greatly valued having such a good tenant until she decided to sell the flat.

Being a stellar tenant, Steve held the keys to landlord heaven. Anna was eager to keep him around, treating him like the king of her castle – until she realised that even royalty has to move out when the time comes!

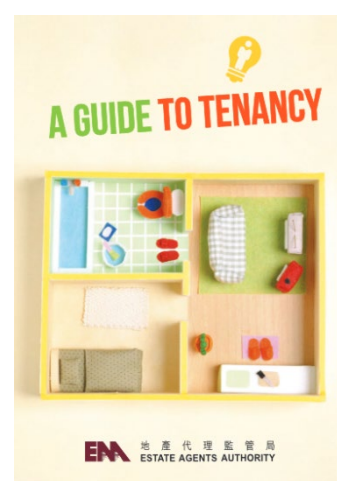
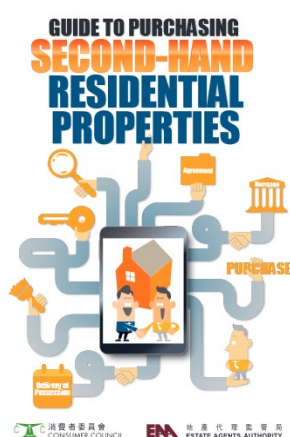
Conclusion: A Cooking Analogy

From navigating the Hong Kong property scene to unlocking the door of your new residence, it's quite an adventure. With the right mix of elements and a bit of practice, this experience can be truly rewarding.

The recipe for success includes know-how, dedication, and strong relationships with your estate agent and landlord. These essential ingredients will help you blend seamlessly into the renting process. Finding a place to call your own is a significant milestone – worthy of a mouth-watering celebration with friends and family!

May the advice and tips in this eBook empower you to approach your housing goals with confidence and ease. As you embark on this exciting journey, I wish you the very best in discovering a property that perfectly suits your lifestyle in this vibrant metropolis. After all, acquiring your dream home is like whipping up the perfect soufflé: it takes the right preparation, practical skill, and a generous dose of patience.

Like a master chef, you have all the tools at your disposal to find your delightful space. So when showtime comes, just roll up your sleeves and serve up something special!



For more information on renting or buying property in Hong Kong, as well as understanding your rights and responsibilities, feel free to download these booklets and others published by the Estate Agents Authority at www.oikos.hk/more-ebooks.

Appendix: How to Craft a Compelling Offer

After choosing the desired property, it is essential to present a compelling offer to the landlord. Start by providing information about your background and family size. Additionally, share details that could enhance the likelihood of your offer being accepted. Finally, clearly outline your timelines and requests to ensure that both parties can effectively manage expectations and estimate costs. Once the landlord has accepted your offer, avoid making further requests, as this could be perceived as unfair and might lead to complications in the deal. Here is an example of an offer:

Property: Address

Client: A young couple from the UK. The husband is a senior manager at HSBC, and his wife is an English teacher at Sonrise International School. They have lived in Hong Kong for five years and speak basic Cantonese and Putonghua. They have a three-year-old son and a two-year-old toilet-trained Poodle. They will co-sign the tenancy agreement and can provide proof of employment and income upon request.

They have a domestic helper who will live with them. The entire family are non-smokers, very clean and tidy, and are committed to taking good care of the property.

Offer: HK\$29,000 (Note: The landlord is asking for HK\$31,000, and the market price is HK\$30,000)

Lease Start Date: 1 September 2025

Property Handover Date: 25 August 2025

Rent-Free Period: 7 days

Tenancy Term: 2 years (the first year is fixed, while the second year is optional)

Break Clause: Either party may terminate the contract after 11 months by giving one month's prior written notice to the other party.

Requests for the Landlord (tasks to be completed *before* handover):

1. Remove the bed in the master bedroom and the sofa in the living room.
2. Repaint the walls in all rooms to cover any marks.
3. Redo the caulking in the bathroom.
4. Replace the mosquito nets on the windows.
5. Repair any damaged items (if applicable).
6. Clean the flat thoroughly and service the air conditioning units.

About the Author

Daniel W. Lam, a native of Hong Kong, has been an active participant in the real estate industry since 2010. He has held a variety of roles, including church administrator, insurance agent, language officer at an educational organisation, and voluntary first aider with the Auxiliary Medical Service.



Lam began his career in real estate as an agent with Centaline Property Agency Limited before joining Century 21 Surveyors Limited as an independent estate agent. In 2015, he took a leap by launching his own property venture.

Embracing a strong ethic of integrity and proficiency in both Chinese and English, Daniel and his team have assisted clients from diverse backgrounds and regions around the world. They strive to provide their clients with independent advice and the highest level of professional service. Some testimonials can be found at www.oikos.hk.

Daniel enjoys reading, writing, swimming, playing table tennis, watching inspirational films, and laughing out loud. With a keen interest in words and creating bilingual slogans, he has won several prizes in open translation, naming, and slogan-writing competitions.

Your Feedback Can Make a Difference!

Thank you for taking the time to read this eBook. Your home-hunting journey in Hong Kong is sure to be an exciting and valuable experience. Sharing your story can help us enhance this work and provide great blessings to others. Your thoughtful input is truly appreciated. Please write to Daniel at daniel@oikos.hk with any feedback or suggestions for improvement. Thank you for your contribution!