

# 不務正業

*bu2 wu4 zheng4 ye4*

A British airport has set up a canine team to detect contraband. The project is quite costly – £1.25 million (HK\$14.16 million) was spent over seven months on new kennels and the costs of operation.

The dogs each have their specialty in detecting items such as drugs, tobacco, cash and meat, and they have occasionally found some meat or cigarettes.

But they have failed to find any illegal “Class A” drugs – those considered the most dangerous such as heroin or cocaine. Detecting these drugs should be their “very top” priority. The dogs have, however, shown themselves rather adept at finding cheese and sausages.

Their performance was evaluated and found to be a “low return on investment.” Speaking plainly, the dog team is a waste of time and money. The problem, clearly, is that the dogs have been “不務正業” (*bu2 wu4 zheng4 ye4*).

## Idiom by Lon Yan

“不” (*bu2*) is “no,” “not,” “務” (*wu4*) “to engage in,” “正” (*zheng4*) “correct,” “right,” “proper,” and “業” (*ye4*) “business,” “profession,” “work.” “正業” (*zheng4 ye4*) is “proper duties” and “務正” (*wu4 zheng4*) means “to attend to one’s proper duties.”

Literally, “不務正業” (*bu2 wu4 zheng4 ye4*) is “not attend to one’s proper work.” It means “to goof around,” “to be derelict in one’s duties and run irrelevant business,” “not to do honest work,” “not to live by honest labor.”

When a teacher spends all his time tending the school garden, it is “不務正業” (*bu2 wu4 zheng4 ye4*), so is the young man who refuses to get a job and stays home to play online games all day.

### Terms containing the character “業” (*ye4*) include:

職業 (*zhi2 ye4*) – an occupation; a profession

業務 (*ye4 wu4*) – business

業績 (*ye4 ji4*) – performance; track record

業餘 (*ye4 yu2*) – an amateur