TIME100 Next honours Japan mayor Kawata

LEVEL A2/B1

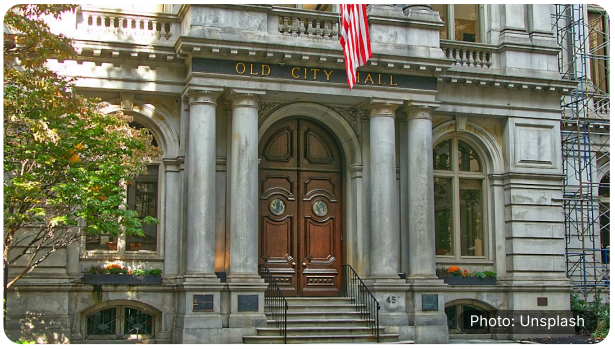


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I. WARM-UP

1. What do you think a mayor does each day?
2. Is it easy to work and care for a baby? Why or why not?
3. What famous lists or awards do you know?

II. KEY VOCABULARY

mayor
The elected leader of a town or city government.

maternity leave
Time off from work for a mother to have and care for a baby.

debate
A public discussion where people share different opinions.

supporter
A person who agrees with and helps someone or an idea.

critic
A person who says they do not agree and explains why.

deputy
A person who is second in charge and can act for the leader.

remote
Working from home or another place away from the office.

policy
An official plan or set of rules made by an organisation or government.

III. READING

Shoko Kawata, mayor of Yawata City in Kyoto, was named to TIME's TIME100 Next list of rising stars. The honour came weeks after she gave birth to her first child on 15 September. She is the first mayor in Japan to take maternity leave.

Her choice started a national debate on whether elected officials should take time off for childbirth. Some supporters said having a baby is hard and she is setting a good example. Critics called her decision irresponsible and asked for pay cuts during leave.

There is no legal framework for local elected officials, so Kawata made a plan. She transferred authority to deputy mayor Shigeto Nose for 16 weeks and worked remotely when she could. After the birth, she thanked people for their support on X. She said she will keep working to improve policies for parents and children in Japan.

Reading text adapted from reporting by **BBC News***: "Japan's first mayor to take maternity leave...". Original article linked at theenglishwire.com.*

IV. COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. What list did TIME include Shoko Kawata on?
2. When did Shoko Kawata give birth to her first child?
3. Which city does Shoko Kawata lead as mayor?
4. How did she manage her duties during maternity leave?
5. What does she plan to work on next in Japan?

V. DISCUSSION

1. Should elected leaders be able to take maternity or paternity leave? Why?
2. How can a city support parents who are working?
3. Is remote work a good option for leaders? Why or why not?
4. Do public awards, like lists, help leaders do their jobs?

VI. GRAMMAR FOCUS

Gerunds and infinitives

A gerund is verb+ing used as a noun (enjoy reading; after prepositions: for/about/after + -ing). An infinitive is to + verb after verbs like want/plan/decide/hope (want to go, plan to help).

*"**Working remotely** can be tiring."*
*"She hopes **to inspire others**."*

VII. GRAMMAR EXERCISE

Complete each gap with a gerund (-ing) or an infinitive (to + verb).

1. She decided (take) ___ maternity leave. _____
2. Supporters praised her for (set) ___ a good example. _____
3. Critics talked about (cut) ___ her pay during leave. _____
4. She said she will keep (work) ___ to improve policies. _____
5. Officials plan (transfer) ___ duties to a deputy. _____

Teacher's Notes

TEACHERS ONLY

These notes are designed to help you get the most out of this lesson. Please do not share this page with students.

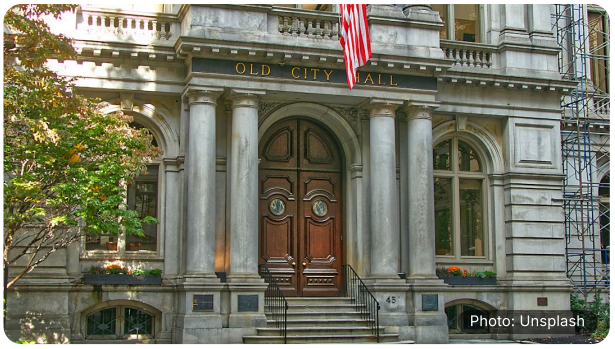


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I. LESSON GUIDE

- Timing: 8–10 minutes warm-up, 8–10 minutes vocabulary, 12–15 minutes reading and comprehension, 8–10 minutes grammar, 10 minutes discussion.
- Pre-teach names and terms: TIME100 Next, maternity leave, deputy mayor, remote work. Clarify that X is a social media platform.
- Run the reading in two passes: gist first, then scan for details (dates, names, 16 weeks). The topic involves pregnancy, work and public criticism, so start discussion in pairs and allow students to talk about the news rather than about themselves.
- Differentiation: stronger students summarise both sides of the debate; others underline sentences showing support vs criticism before sharing.

II. DISCUSSION FACILITATION TIPS

1. Take a quick poll, then pair students with different views to explain their reasons.
2. Elicit examples from the text first, then ask students to add ideas from their city.
3. Have students list two pros and two cons before sharing with the class.
4. Ask for one benefit and one risk of awards, with examples from the story.

III. EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Writing: In pairs, write a 70-word post Kawata could share on X thanking supporters and critics.

Debate: In groups, prepare 1-minute speeches for or against paid leave for elected officials.

IV. ANSWER KEY OVERVIEW

Comprehension questions: short factual answers from the text.

Grammar exercise: Gerunds and infinitives

Discussion: open-ended. Accept any reasonable ideas supported by examples and reasoning.

Answer Key

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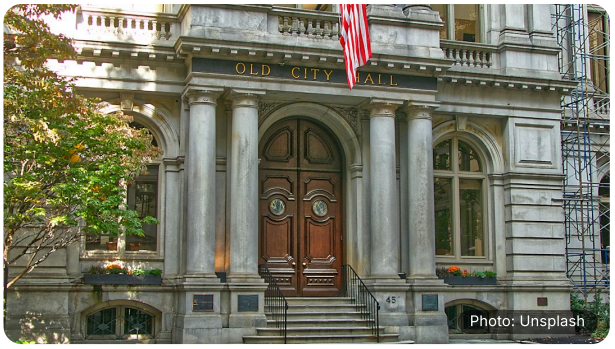


Photo: Unsplash

IV. COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. What list did TIME include Shoko Kawata on?
   The TIME100 Next list of rising stars.
2. When did Shoko Kawata give birth to her first child?
   On 15 September.
3. Which city does Shoko Kawata lead as mayor?
   Yawata City in Kyoto.
4. How did she manage her duties during maternity leave?
   She gave duties to her deputy for 16 weeks and worked remotely.
5. What does she plan to work on next in Japan?
   Improving policies for parents and children in Japan.

V. DISCUSSION

Open answers. Accept any reasonable ideas supported by examples and reasoning.

VII. GRAMMAR EXERCISE

Complete each gap with a gerund (-ing) or an infinitive (to + verb).

1. She decided ___ maternity leave. **to take**
2. Supporters praised her for ___ a good example. **setting**
3. Critics talked about ___ her pay during leave. **cutting**
4. She said she will keep ___ to improve policies. **working**
5. Officials plan ___ duties to a deputy. **to transfer**

VI. GRAMMAR FOCUS

Key point: A gerund is verb+ing used as a noun (enjoy reading; after prepositions: for/about/after + -ing). An infinitive is to + verb after verbs like want/plan/decide/hope (want to go, plan to help). (Examples constructed.)

> *"**Working remotely** can be tiring."*
>
> *"She hopes **to inspire others**."*