Interviewing Strategies for Journalism & Communications Students

PREPARING FOR INTERVIEWS
Research the organization that you’re applying to. Be aware of any industry or company news that could come up in the interview. Check the company’s website, newsletters, LinkedIn profile and social media to be sure you’re knowledgeable of current events. Consider talking to your network to get valuable insight and tips.

TYPES OF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

**Opener/Self-descriptive**- Opening questions are generally similar, and because of this they are easy to be prepared for. Your answer should address your experiences, qualifications, and goals.

**Examples**
- Tell me about yourself and what interests you in this position.
- Why do you want to work in this industry?
- How would you describe yourself?
- What is your greatest strength?
- What media outlets do you follow and why?
- Who is your favorite industry influencer/campaign and why?

**Behavioral**- Behavioral questions are designed to see how you’ve handled challenges in the past.

**Examples**
- Tell me about a time when you worked on a team.
- When was a time when you had to work under pressure and manage conflicting deadlines?
- Tell me about the best story or campaign you have worked on.

**Negative**- Negative questions address one of your weaknesses or failures in order to determine if you have some level of self-awareness. You should also demonstrate that you are able to put into action a process for improvement.

**Examples**
- What is your greatest weakness?
- Tell me about a time when you failed or the biggest mistake you have made.
- What work related tasks do you not like to do?
- Tell me about a time when you had a conflict with a co-worker. How did you handle it?

**Situational**- Situational questions are designed to see how you would make decisions on the job. You may be given a situation or case and asked to describe how you would handle it. It is advisable to give examples if possible.

**Examples**
- How would you put together a pitch?
- If you were to put together a team, what qualities would you look for in teammates?
- What would you do if you faced resistance or opposition when introducing a new story or pitch to an editor/client?
- Pitch me a story or idea right now.
- How would you deal with a breaking story or a crisis?
- What would you do if you were in a situation where your professional ethics were compromised?

**Closing**- Closing questions are always asked in some form. You should summarize your skills and abilities, directly addressing why you are a good candidate.

**Examples**
- Why should we hire you?
- Why do you believe that you are a good candidate for this position?
- Is there anything else that you would like to add?
RESPONDING TO INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
When answering interview questions, your answers should typically be 30-90 seconds. Think of your responses to those questions as opportunities to share who you are and what you could bring to the organization, as it relates to the job. When responding to questions:

- Touch upon aspects of your skill-set, education, and experience that are relevant to the position you are applying for. In addition, offer examples.
- If a weakness or an area of development comes up during the interview, explain how you are improving and developing that skill set.
- When outlining your career goals be sure they align with the position and company you are applying to.
- Request that your interviewer clarify their question if necessary or inquire whether you've fully answered their question.

S.T.A.R. METHOD
The S.T.A.R. Method is a technique for answering questions that helps you structure your answers in a way that gives the interviewer all of the relevant information about a specific qualification for a job.

- Situation: Tell the interviewer about a specific challenge or situation. Give your audience context and enough detail to understand the story.
- Task: What were you trying to achieve? What was the assignment? Tell the interviewer what you were trying to get accomplish in this situation.
- Action: What did you do? If there was a problem or challenge, how did you handle it? Tell your interviewer what you did and why.
- Result: What was the outcome of this situation? Did you meet your objective? Don’t forget to tell your interviewer what you learned from this experience, and how have you applied that knowledge since.

PRACTICE
Log into Gator CareerLink https://www.crc.ufl.edu/ to use the Virtual Mock Interview module or request a career planning appointment with Jaime Harsell to go over interview best practices or a mock interview.

MOCK INTERVIEW FEEDBACK
TIPS FOR IN-PERSON INTERVIEW COURTESIES

- Be polite to every individual you encounter starting in the parking lot
- Turn off your cellphone when you arrive
- Arrive ten minutes early
- Use titles such as Ms., Mr., Dr., etc. unless prompted to do otherwise
- Speak clearly and deliberately at a conversational speed
- Maintain eye contact with interviewers
- Sit up straight in your chair. Don’t lean too far forward or too far back.
- Be confident, friendly, and sincere

ADDITIONAL TIPS FOR IN-PERSON INTERVIEWS

- Bring a few copies of your resume on resume paper to provide to interviewers
- Bring your portfolio – organize it based on relevance and/or accomplished works
- Dress business professional in a suit and have clean, polished dress shoes
- When entering an interview room, shake hands, make eye contact, and introduce yourself to every individual in the room
- Always ask for contact information, such as a business card, after an interview
- When exiting the room, shake hands, make eye contact, and thank each of your interviewers
- Never discuss salary in a first round interview unless the interviewer brings it up

PHONE INTERVIEW TIPS

Phone interviews are typically short interviews designed to help the company decide whether to schedule an in-person interview.

- Eliminate distractions by finding a quiet room with minimal noise interference
- Turn off application notifications or call-waiting on land-lines
- Answer the phone warmly and state your name in the greeting
- Have your resume and a short list of accomplishments nearby to remind of things to mention during the interview
- Smile. Even though your interviewers cannot see it, smiling brings energy and excitement to your voice
- Be concise. You will not have non-verbal cues from the interviewer about when to stop speaking

VIRTUAL INTERVIEW TIPS

Virtual interviews help companies save resources while still seeing your personality and mannerisms.

- Be sure that your username or handle is professional
- Stage the area behind you, a blank wall or clear all clutter
- Make sure that you are in a quiet, well-lit location with a solid internet connection
- Close all other applications on your computer
- If you are using a laptop, be sure that you are plugged into an outlet.
- Address any technology problems immediately to make all parties can hear or see
- Dress like you would for an in-person interview, but avoid wearing patterns, they can have a distracting effect on the camera
- Look directly into the camera, not the screen. It gives the impression of making eye contact.
- Be sure that the camera gives a good shot of your head, shoulders, and hands. Body language and non-verbal cues are important, so you want to be sure that the upper half of your body is visible.
- Smile and try to keep a pleasant facial expression for the duration.
- Use your notes sparingly. The interviewer can see your eyes, so it is important that you are not obviously reading from your notes.
PREPARE YOUR OWN QUESTIONS:

- What do you like about working here?
- How has the industry changed since you started?
- How do you see the newsroom changing in the next few years?
- What will a successful first year look like in this position?
- What are the biggest challenges the person in this role will face?

FOLLOWING UP AFTER AN INTERVIEW

Follow-up with a thank you email or card within 24 hours of an interview. After an interview, you may not hear right away as to whether or not you’ve been hired. You can email either the HR Representative or Hiring Manager a week after an interview to see if they have any additional questions or need further information. After that, only initiate contact via email or phone once a week. The hiring process can be lengthy, so be patient.

Writing Test Tips:

1. Spelling and grammar are paramount
2. Demonstrate mastery of AP Style
3. Know the proper formatting for various writing types - news release, broadcast, article, social media, pitch etc.
4. Be familiar with editing for readability
5. Be creative and authentic
6. Practice and time yourself, most writing tests are usually 20-30 minutes or less