The Interview
strategies for successful preparation

What to Expect
You can typically expect an interview to last 30 minutes and to consist of customized questions relating to your background, area of interest and the position you applied for. Keeping your answers clear, concise and honest helps an interviewer get a better sense of who you are and what you can do. Always remember STAR! (see back side of this sheet for details)

Research the Organization
• How long has it existed?
• What is its mission?
• Competitors?
• What does it produce?
• Who does it serve?
• Clients?
• Size?
• Location?
• Recent news?
Visit the organization’s website to assist in your research as well as performing Google and social media searches.

Prepare and Practice
1. Develop specific examples that highlight skills that match job requirements and qualifications.
2. Take the time to practice interviewing, either with friends or via a mock interview.
3. Make sure that you can answer each question honestly and sincerely without sounding like you recorded them.

Anticipate Difficult Questions
How can you explain your low grade point average? Why did you change your major? Don’t try to avoid these questions or answer vaguely. Explain the situation honestly and in a positive manner. Try to turn a weakness into a strength. For example, “Yes, my GPA is low, but this is because I work thirty hours per week to put myself through school.”

Prepare Questions For Your Interviewer
The end of the interview is usually reserved for your questions. Do not just ask generic questions, and do not ask questions that could easily be found about the company by doing research. Ask questions that will help you determine if you are a good match for the position and organization and questions that are specifically relevant to your interviewers.

Media Career Service provides mock interviews. Make your appointment today through Handshake @ Illinois.
**Behavioral Interviewing**

One of the tools used to assess competencies is the “Behavioral Interview.” The idea behind behavioral interviewing is that the most accurate predictor of future performance is past performance in a similar situation. These structured interviews focus on experiences, behaviors, knowledge, skills and abilities that are job related. Keep in mind that the interviewer is usually evaluating you against a profile of desired behaviors considered necessary for success.

**Responding to Behavioral Interview Questions: Always Use STAR!**

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<tr>
<th><strong>Situation</strong></th>
<th><strong>Task</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>Set the stage for the interviewer by providing an overview of the situation and any relevant background information. Be specific and succinct.</td>
<td>What goal(s) were you working toward? What were you trying to accomplish?</td>
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<th><strong>Action</strong></th>
<th><strong>Result</strong></th>
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<td>Describe the actions YOU took to address the situation with an appropriate amount of detail. What specific steps did YOU take and what was YOUR particular contribution?</td>
<td>Describe the outcome of your actions and don’t be shy about taking credit for your behavior. Your answer should contain multiple positive results whenever possible.</td>
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**Sample Interview Questions**

Tell me about yourself.
What are your long and short term goals?
Tell me about a creative idea that you have had.
Why did you choose the career for which you are prepared?
Tell me about a time you had to explain a difficult problem.
What do you consider to be your greatest strengths and weaknesses?
How would you describe yourself to a stranger?
Tell me about a time where you needed to learn to do something new.
What personal strategies do you use to deal with stressful work situations?
Tell me about a major problem you encountered and how you dealt with it.
What have you learned from participation in extracurricular activities?
Describe a volunteer, work or school experience where you led a group.
What qualifications do you have that make you think you will be successful?
What two or three accomplishments have given you the most satisfaction? Why?
What is the biggest project you ever had to plan? How did you organize the situation? What was the result?
What do you know about our organization?
In what type of work environment are you most comfortable?
Tell me about a time when you effectively influenced a person or group. Contrast with a time when you were not successful in using your influence.
Tell me about a time when you backed down on an issue. Why?
Give me an example of a time when you had to negotiate for additional resources or time to complete a project. What was the outcome?