

Antique Dealer interview questions

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What to expect

Antique Dealer interviews assess your knowledge of historical objects, your ability to authenticate and price items, and your skill in building relationships with buyers and sellers. You will likely meet with the owner or manager of the dealership, and the conversation may include a practical assessment of an item.

- **Technical:** Questions about authentication, dating, restoration, and pricing methods.
- **Behavioural:** Questions about past sales, negotiations, and client relationships using the STAR method.
- **Scenario:** Hypothetical situations where you must demonstrate judgement, ethics, and problem-solving.
- **Client-facing:** Questions about how you build rapport with collectors and handle difficult buyers.
- **Process:** Questions about how you source stock, manage inventory, and run online listings.

The interview typically begins with a conversation about your experience and interest in antiques. You may be asked to examine an item and discuss its age, condition, and value. The interview often concludes with a discussion of sales targets, commission structures, and your approach to building a client base.

1. Can you walk me through your process for authenticating and dating an antique item?

Why they ask

This tests your technical knowledge and systematic approach to verification.

How to structure your answer

Use a step-by-step walkthrough, covering maker's marks, materials, construction techniques, provenance, and reference sources.

Example answer

"First, I examine the item for maker's marks, signatures, or labels. I look at the materials and construction techniques, such as dovetails or hand-forged nails, which can indicate a period. Then I cross-reference with reference books, online databases like Barnebys, and auction records. If provenance is available, I research the history of ownership. Finally, if I'm uncertain, I consult with specialists or a conservator. I always document my findings."

2. Tell me about a time you had to negotiate a sale with a difficult buyer.

Why they ask

This reveals your negotiation skills and ability to handle challenging client interactions.

How to structure your answer

Use the STAR method: describe the situation, the task, the action you took, and the result.

Example answer

"At a previous dealership, a collector was interested in a Georgian tea caddy but wanted a significant discount. I listened to his concerns and asked what specifically he valued about the piece. I pointed out its rarity and excellent condition, and offered a small concession on delivery. He agreed to the original price and later became a repeat customer."

3. A seller brings in a piece they claim is a rare antique, but you suspect it's a reproduction. How do you handle it?

Why they ask

This assesses your ethical judgement and how you communicate difficult news.

How to structure your answer

Describe your approach to verification, how you would explain your findings, and how you would maintain a good relationship with the seller.

Example answer

"I would politely explain that I need to verify its authenticity. I'd examine it closely and show the seller specific details that suggest it might be a later copy, such as modern screws or unusual wear patterns. If it is a reproduction, I'd decline to purchase but suggest they get a second opinion from an independent appraiser. I'd treat them with respect and keep the door open for future business."

4. What methods do you use to price an antique?

Why they ask

This tests your understanding of market factors and your ability to set fair prices.

How to structure your answer

Outline the key criteria you consider, such as condition, rarity, provenance, and comparable sales, and explain how you balance seller expectations with profit margin.

Example answer

"I consider condition, rarity, provenance, and current market demand. I research comparable sales from auctions and dealer catalogues, and I factor in any restoration costs. I aim for a price that is fair to the seller and allows for a reasonable margin. I also stay flexible and adjust prices based on how long an item has been in stock."

5. How do you build relationships with collectors and repeat buyers?

Why they ask

This shows your client-facing skills and your ability to grow a loyal customer base.

How to structure your answer

Describe your approach to understanding client interests, maintaining contact, and providing excellent service.

Example answer

"I take time to understand their interests and tastes. I keep records of what they collect and alert them to new pieces that match. I provide detailed information and after-sales care, such as advice on conservation. I also invite them to previews and keep in touch through a newsletter. This builds trust and encourages repeat business."

6. How do you manage inventory and online listings?

Why they ask

This assesses your organisational skills and familiarity with digital tools.

How to structure your answer

Walk through your system for tracking stock, using software, and managing online marketplaces.

Example answer

"I use Excel for tracking stock numbers, costs, and provenance notes, and Xero for financials. For online, I list on eBay and Shopify, writing accurate descriptions and taking clear photos. I monitor enquiries and update listings as items sell. I also use Barnebys to research market trends. I keep a physical inventory tag system to match online listings with stock in the showroom."