

Automotive Dismantler interview questions

careertips.com.au: common questions and what they're really testing

What to expect

Automotive dismantlers are hired for their practical judgement, safety awareness and ability to recover parts without damaging what is left. Interviews usually mix conversation with a yard walk-through and a practical task.

- **Process:** How you assess a vehicle, plan a teardown and manage parts flow.
- **Safety and compliance:** Draining fluids, dangerous goods storage, EPA and WHS requirements, spill response.
- **Technical dismantling:** Removing engines, transmissions, panels and electrical components with the right tools.
- **Behavioural:** Past examples of teamwork, problem solving and attention to detail in a yard.
- **Scenario:** Judgement under pressure when something goes wrong, such as a leak, a damaged part or a safety hazard.
- **Parts and customer:** Identifying reusable parts, using inventory systems and helping customers or fitters find the right component.

Expect a short site induction and yard walk-through, then a one-on-one with a supervisor or operations manager. Questions often start with your tickets and experience, move to a practical teardown or parts identification task, and finish with safety scenarios and how you work with others. Some employers ask for a forklift or tool handling check.

1. Walk me through how you assess an end-of-life vehicle before dismantling it.

Why they ask

This shows whether you can plan a teardown, spot reusable parts and flag hazards before you start.

How to structure your answer

Process question: start with the vehicle's history and paperwork, then a visual check, fluid check and damage assessment, then a parts list and a teardown order.

Example answer

"First I check the compliance and paperwork so I know what I am allowed to dismantle and what must be recorded. Then I walk around the vehicle looking for damage, missing panels and obvious leaks. I check the fluids, battery and fuel tank, and I note any hazardous items like LPG tanks or airbags. After that I list the parts that are likely to sell, such as the engine, transmission, lights and electronics, and I plan the order I will remove them so I do not block myself in. I tag parts as I go and keep the bay clear for the next vehicle."

2. How do you safely drain and store fluids such as oil, coolant and fuel?

Why they ask

Fluids are the main environmental and safety risk in a wrecking yard, so employers want to know you can handle them without spills or breaches.

How to structure your answer

Safety question: identify the fluid and its hazard, choose the right container and label, use spill controls, store by compatibility, and record the waste.

Example answer

"I start by identifying the fluid and checking the safety data sheet if I am not sure. I use a dedicated drain pan and funnel, wear gloves and eye protection, and make sure the vehicle is stable on stands or a hoist. I drain oil, coolant and fuel into separate labelled containers, never mixing them. Fuel and oil go to the dangerous goods store, coolant goes to its own drum, and I keep spill kits nearby. I check bunding for cracks and clean up any drips immediately, then record what was drained so the waste is tracked correctly."

3. Tell me about a time you identified a high-value part that others had missed.

Why they ask

This tests your attention to detail and whether you understand what parts are worth recovering.

How to structure your answer

Behavioural question: use STAR. Situation, task, action, result. Keep the result about the part being saved and the customer or team benefiting.

Example answer

"We had a written-off ute come in that had been picked over by another yard. The team thought the useful parts were gone. I took the time to check the vehicle properly and found the turbo and the complete wiring loom were still intact and undamaged. I removed them carefully, tested the turbo and labelled the loom with the model and year. Both parts went onto the shelf and sold within a fortnight. It meant we recovered value from a vehicle that was otherwise going straight to scrap."

4. You notice a spill near the parts shelf during a busy afternoon. What do you do?

Why they ask

This is a scenario about judgement under pressure and whether you put safety and the environment before speed.

How to structure your answer

Scenario question: secure the area first, identify the substance, contain and clean up, report, then review how it happened.

Example answer

"I would stop what I am doing and secure the area so no one walks through the spill. I would check what the fluid is and whether it is flammable or corrosive. If it is safe to do so, I would use the spill kit to contain it and stop it reaching any drain. I would tell my supervisor straight away and record it in the incident book. Once it is cleaned up, I would look at where it came from, such as a leaking drum or a vehicle, and fix that so it does not happen again."

5. Describe your experience removing an engine or transmission from a front-wheel drive vehicle.

Why they ask

This checks your practical teardown skill and whether you can work without damaging the parts you are trying to save.

How to structure your answer

Technical question: talk through preparation, disconnection, support, removal and storage. Mention tools and safety throughout.

Example answer

"On a front-wheel drive vehicle I start by draining the fluids and disconnecting the battery. Then I label and disconnect the wiring, hoses, drive shafts and mounts. I support the engine or transmission with an engine hoist or a transmission jack before I remove the final bolts. I work slowly so I do not damage the alloy housings or sensors. Once it is out, I drain any remaining fluid, cap the openings

and store it on a pallet or shelf with a tag showing the model, year and kilometres if known. I keep the bay clear and put the tools away before starting the next job.”

6. How do you keep parts inventory accurate and easy for customers to find?

Why they ask

Parts that cannot be found do not sell, so employers want to know you can use inventory systems and keep the yard organised.

How to structure your answer

Process and customer question: describe your labelling, storage, data entry and checking habits, then how that helps the counter or fitters.

Example answer

“As soon as a part comes off a vehicle I clean it, inspect it and give it a tag with the make, model, year and part number. I enter it into Hollander Powerlink straight away so the front counter can see it is available. I store parts in set areas, such as engines with engines, panels with panels, and I keep the aisles clear. I do a quick shelf check each week to catch anything that has been moved or sold without being updated. That way customers and fitters get the right part the first time and we do not double-handle stock.”