

Barber interview questions

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What to expect

Barbering interviews mix a chat about experience and client style with practical checks on hygiene knowledge and, quite often, a live or observed cutting demonstration. Shops want to know you can hold a full book of appointments, keep tools sterile, and handle a straight razor safely, so expect questions that test judgement as much as technique.

- **Technical/process:** Questions on cutting technique, razor shaving and tool maintenance, checking you can describe your actual method step by step.
- **Safety and hygiene:** Questions on sterilisation, sharps handling and infection control, since these are non-negotiable in a licensed shop.
- **Client-facing scenario:** Situations involving consultation, difficult requests or scheduling conflicts, testing how you balance client wishes with what will actually suit them.
- **Behavioural:** Past-experience questions about handling an unhappy client or a mistake, looking for accountability and a fix, not just an excuse.

Most barbershop interviews start with a short conversation about your training and current client base, move into hygiene and safety questions, then often ask you to talk through or physically demonstrate a cut or shave on a mannequin or willing colleague. Expect the shop owner or senior barber to ask about availability and how you handle a fully booked Saturday before wrapping up with your questions about commission or booth rent arrangements.

1. Walk me through how you sterilise your clippers, scissors and razors between clients.

Why they ask

Infection control is a licensing requirement for barbershops, and shops need to know you'll follow protocol without being told every time.

How to structure your answer

Step-by-step walkthrough: describe the sequence from used tool to ready-for-next-client, naming the products or equipment involved.

Example answer

"After each client I wipe down clippers and remove hair with a brush, then spray with a hospital-grade disinfectant and let it sit for the required contact time before wiping clean. Combs and scissors go into a UV sterilising cabinet between clients, and any blades used for razor work are single-use and disposed of straight into a sharps container. I also wipe down the chair, cape and headrest before the next person sits down, so nothing gets missed even on a busy day."

2. Tell me about a time a client was unhappy with a haircut and how you handled it.

Why they ask

Shops want proof you can take responsibility and repair the relationship rather than get defensive.

How to structure your answer

STAR: situation, task, action, result.

Example answer

"A client once came back saying his fade was uneven after he'd washed it at home. I sat him down straight away, had a proper look under good light, and could see one side had grown out slightly more than I'd realised at the time. I apologised, cleaned up the line without charging him, and explained

what to ask for next visit to keep it sharper longer. He kept coming back every few weeks after that, so it clearly worked in the long run."

3. A client wants a skin fade but has a visible scar and a thinning patch on one side. How do you approach the consultation?

Why they ask

Tests judgement in balancing what the client wants against what will actually look good and suit their hair or scalp condition.

How to structure your answer

Judgement-under-pressure: state the immediate read of the situation, the options you'd raise, and how you'd reach an agreed plan before touching the clippers.

Example answer

"I'd point out the scar and thinning patch before starting, since a tight skin fade would draw attention to both rather than hide them. I'd suggest a slightly longer fade with more texture on top to disguise the thin patch, and show him a photo so he can picture it. If he still wants the tight fade after that, it's his call and I'll do it, but I make sure he's made that decision with full information rather than finding out afterwards."

4. What's your process for a straight-razor hot towel shave, and how do you make sure it's done safely?

Why they ask

Razor work carries real injury risk, so shops need confidence in your technique and precautions before letting you loose on a client's neck.

How to structure your answer

Process walkthrough with explicit safety checkpoints built into each stage.

Example answer

"I start with a hot towel to open the pores and soften the hair, then apply pre-shave oil and a lather. I always shave with the grain first using short, controlled strokes, checking the blade's sharp edge and my grip before each pass. I keep the skin taut with my free hand and go over trickier spots like the jawline more slowly. Once done, I apply a cool towel and an alcohol-free aftershave to reduce irritation, and I check in with the client about any sting or redness before they leave the chair."

5. It's a Saturday, fully booked, and a long-time regular walks in without an appointment. How do you handle it?

Why they ask

Barbershops run on repeat business, so shops want to see you protect client relationships without letting the schedule fall apart.

How to structure your answer

Scenario response: describe the immediate options, the trade-off, and the decision you'd land on.

Example answer

"I'd let him know that I'm booked solid but ask if he can wait 15 to 20 minutes between clients, or offer him the next available slot with a colleague if he needs to be somewhere. If he's happy to wait, I'd fit him in during a natural gap, like between a cut and a shave for someone else, rather than rushing another client's service to squeeze him in."

6. What would you do if you nicked a client with the razor during a shave?

Why they ask

Checks that you know the correct incident response, both for client safety and for meeting workplace hygiene obligations.

How to structure your answer

Incident response walkthrough: immediate action, communication with the client, and follow-up steps.

Example answer

"I'd stop straight away, apply pressure with a clean piece of gauze, and reassure the client calmly rather than making a big deal of it. Once the bleeding's stopped I'd clean the area properly and apply a suitable dressing if needed. I'd also dispose of the blade immediately and swap in a fresh one before continuing, and I'd let the shop know so it's logged if that's required under our procedures."