

Boat Builder interview questions

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What to expect

Boat building interviews usually combine a conversation about your trade background with a practical assessment of your skills. Employers want to know you can work from plans, handle materials safely and finish a job to survey standard.

- **Technical and trade knowledge:** Questions about hull construction, laminating, fit out, materials and reading plans.
- **Safety:** How you manage fibreglass dust, resin fumes, power tools and workshop housekeeping.
- **Scenario and problem solving:** What you would do when you find a defect, an alignment issue or a change in a build.
- **Behavioural and teamwork:** How you have worked with other trades, handled deadlines and communicated on a job.
- **Process:** Walk-throughs of how you complete a specific task from start to finish.

A typical interview starts with a phone or in-person screen with the workshop supervisor or owner. If you progress, you will spend time in the workshop or on a vessel, often completing a short practical task such as a small lamination, a repair or a set-out from a plan. The final conversation covers pay, hours, tickets and how you work in a small team. Some employers ask you to bring examples of your work or photos of completed jobs.

1. Walk me through how you would set out and laminate a hull section from a set of plans.

Why they ask

This shows whether you can translate a drawing into a physical part and control the laminating process.

How to structure your answer

A process answer: start with the plans, then explain lofting, templates, mould preparation, material cutting, layup, consolidation, cure and inspection in order.

Example answer

"First I read the plans and check the dimensions against the lofting table, then I set out the station lines and make templates for the section. I prepare the mould or plug, making sure it is clean and release agent is applied. I cut the glass to the correct orientation and overlap, mix resin to the specified ratio, then wet out and consolidate each layer with rollers to remove air. I allow the specified cure time, then inspect for dry spots, voids or delamination before trimming and finishing the edge."

2. Tell me about a time you identified a defect or alignment issue during a build. What did you do?

Why they ask

Employers want to see you catch problems early and act rather than hide them.

How to structure your answer

Use STAR: situation, task, action, result. Keep it specific to a boat building task.

Example answer

"On a commercial workboat build I was fitting an engine bed and noticed the shaft log was out of alignment with the gearbox flange. I stopped and flagged it to the supervisor, then we re-measured from the plans and found the bed had been set a few millimetres off. I re-drilled and shimmed the bed, realigned the shaft and documented the correction. The vessel went into the water without vibration or

rework on the driveline, and the supervisor asked me to check alignment on the next two builds.”

3. You are asked to repair a damaged fibreglass hull on a commercial vessel that needs to return to service quickly. How do you approach it?

Why they ask

This tests your judgement under time pressure and your ability to plan a repair that is both fast and sound.

How to structure your answer

A scenario answer: assess, plan, communicate, execute, inspect. Show you balance speed with structural integrity.

Example answer

“I start by inspecting the damage to see how deep it goes and whether the structure behind the skin is affected. I take photos and measurements, then plan the repair: grind back to sound laminate, taper the edges, and cut glass to the correct schedule. I order or pull the materials, set up ventilation and PPE, and get the laminators or a second pair of hands if needed. I keep the skipper or owner informed of the timeline. Once the repair is laid up and cured, I fair and finish it, then do a tap test and visual check before signing it off. If the damage is beyond my scope I say so and bring in a surveyor or engineer.”

4. What safety practices do you follow when working with fibreglass, resins and power tools?

Why they ask

Safety is a daily part of boat building and employers need to know you will not take shortcuts.

How to structure your answer

A safety answer: identify hazards, then controls. Cover PPE, ventilation, tool guarding, housekeeping and emergency response.

Example answer

“For fibreglass and resins I wear nitrile gloves, safety glasses and a respirator rated for organic vapours, and I make sure the booth or workshop has extraction running. I keep resins and catalysts separate and labelled, and I never mix more than I can use in the working time. With power tools I check guards, use push sticks on the saw, and keep leads off the floor. I clean up dust and offcuts as I go, and I know where the eyewash station and spill kit are. If something does not feel safe I stop and fix it before continuing.”

5. Describe your experience with AutoCAD, Rhino 3D or CNC routers in boat building.

Why they ask

Modern boat building uses digital tools for set-out, nesting and cutting, so this shows your technical range.

How to structure your answer

A technical answer: name the software, describe what you use it for, and give an example of a job where it helped.

Example answer

“I use AutoCAD to draw and check hull lines and to nest parts for cutting. On a recent aluminium workboat I modelled a deck frame in Rhino 3D to confirm the curvature before cutting, then exported the nested parts to the CNC router. That let us cut the plate accurately and saved time on fairing because the pieces fitted together on the first pass. I also use the router to cut templates and jigs for repeat components.”

6. How do you work with other trades, such as electricians or plumbers, during a fit out?

Why they ask

Boat builds depend on coordination between trades, and employers want someone who communicates and plans ahead.

How to structure your answer

A behavioural or process answer: describe how you schedule, communicate and resolve clashes.

Example answer

"I work from the build schedule and talk to the other trades early about where their runs and fittings need to go. Before I close up a floor or bulkhead I check that the electrician and plumber have finished their first fix and that I have the penetrations I need. If a pipe or cable is in the way I raise it at the morning meeting or directly with the tradesperson, and we agree on a change before anyone cuts. I keep a notebook of who has signed off what, so the next stage does not get held up. On one refit we found a clash between a fuel line and a steering ram; I got the plumber and the fitter together, we re-routed the line, and the job stayed on schedule."