

Court Orderly interview questions

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What to expect

Court orderly interviews are run by state, territory or local court administrations and tend to be panel based, usually with a court services manager, a supervisor and sometimes a sheriff's officer or security lead. The panel is testing reliability, procedural accuracy and how you behave around people who are frightened, frustrated or hostile, because those are the conditions you will work in daily.

- **Process and procedure:** Questions that check you know the sequence of a court day and can describe orderly duties in the right order, from courtroom setup through to oaths, escorts and close.
- **Behavioural:** Past-experience questions about staying calm under pressure, handling conflict, and working in a team across shifts.
- **Scenario and judgement:** Short factual situations where you have to decide what to do first, what to escalate, and what not to do without authority.
- **Security and safety:** Questions on entry screening, prohibited items, emergency evacuation, and incident reporting under work health and safety duties.
- **Client-facing and sensitivity:** Questions about assisting jurors, witnesses, victims and self-represented parties with respect and confidentiality.
- **Integrity and suitability:** Questions on impartiality, confidentiality, and handling information about matters before the court, along with checks on clearances and availability for shift work.

Typically a single panel interview of around 30 to 45 minutes, opening with introductions and a rundown of the court and roster, then a set of standardised questions scored against a selection criteria sheet. Most panels ask the same core questions of every candidate, take notes as you answer, and allow time for your questions at the end. Some courts add a short practical component, such as demonstrating a metal detector wand or talking through a screening refusal. Pre-employment checks, including a National Police Check and sometimes a Working with Children Check, follow the interview rather than forming part of it.

1. Walk me through a typical court day from the moment you arrive to when the court rises.

Why they ask

The panel wants to see that you understand the rhythm of a court and can sequence your duties without being told. It also reveals whether you think about preparation and handover.

How to structure your answer

Give a chronological walk-through in clear stages. Cover arrival and roster check, courtroom setup and equipment checks, liaison with bench staff and the sheriff's team, entry screening during the morning peak, calling matters and announcing the judicial officer, oaths and escorts during the day, jury movements, and close-down with incident notes and handover to the next shift.

Example answer

"I start by checking the roster and the daily list so I know which courtrooms are sitting, whether there are jury matters, and whether any matter involves a vulnerable witness or a person in custody. Then I open my assigned courtroom, check the microphones, the recording setup and seating, and confirm with the associate what the bench needs. Before the first matter I take up entry screening, which is the busiest point of the day, and I stay polite and quick so the public queue keeps moving. During the day I call matters, announce the judicial officer on entry and departure, swear in witnesses, and escort jurors and witnesses where they need to go, keeping parties separated. If a jury retires I manage the movements and lunch arrangements. At the end of the day I secure the courtroom, complete any

incident notes, restock forms and disposables at the screening point, and hand over anything outstanding to the next shift."

2. Tell me about a time you had to stay calm when someone was angry and confrontational in front of you.

Why they ask

Court orderlies meet people on the worst day of their lives. The panel is looking for genuine self-control and a method, not a claim that you never get rattled.

How to structure your answer

Use STAR: describe the situation and who was involved, the task you had, the specific actions you took to lower the temperature, and the result, including what you would repeat.

Example answer

"At a court entry point a man arrived late for his matter and was refused entry to the courtroom because the matter had already been dealt with. He became loud and started swearing at the screening officers. My task was to get him away from the queue without a physical confrontation and without making the situation worse. I stepped to the side, kept my hands visible and my voice low and steady, and told him I understood he was frustrated but that I needed him to move to the seating area so we could talk properly. I gave him the registry counter details and told him exactly what to say when he got there. He stayed seated for a few minutes, calmed down, and left without further incident. I logged it afterwards. What I would repeat is moving the person out of the audience rather than trying to win the argument in front of a queue."

3. It is day three of a trial and a juror does not return after the lunch break. What do you do?

Why they ask

This probes judgement under pressure and, importantly, whether you know the limits of your own authority. Orderlies do not decide what happens in a trial, and the panel is listening for that awareness.

How to structure your answer

Work through it as a sequence of immediate actions, then escalation, then documentation. Say clearly what you would not do, which is anything that involves contacting the juror yourself or discussing the matter with anyone outside the chain.

Example answer

"My first step is to check quietly and factually. I would confirm with the jury officer or associate whether the juror has been marked as absent, whether they left the building, and whether any message has come through. I would not call the juror myself and I would not discuss their absence with other jurors or anyone in the public area. I would let the jury officer know immediately and pass the information up to the associate and the bench so the judicial officer can decide how to proceed. While that is happening I would keep the remaining jurors together in the jury room and make sure they are not approached. Afterwards I would record what I observed and the times, and pass it to my supervisor for the file."

4. Explain the difference between an oath and an affirmation, and how you would handle a witness who says they cannot swear on a religious text.

Why they ask

Administering oaths is a core technical duty and mistakes can affect evidence. The panel wants accuracy and a respectful manner.

How to structure your answer

Give a direct definition first, then describe your practical procedure, then deal with the variation. Keep it factual and non-judgemental.

Example answer

"An oath is a promise to tell the truth made with reference to a person's religious belief, usually on a text they hold sacred, while an affirmation is a solemn promise to tell the truth made without religious reference and has the same legal standing. In practice I confirm the person's full name and the capacity in which they are appearing, then ask which they would prefer and make sure the wording matches the form for that matter. If a witness tells me they cannot swear on a religious text, I do not press them. I offer the affirmation, say the words clearly so they can repeat them, confirm they understand the promise they have made, and note on the record which option was used. If anything is ambiguous I check with the associate before the witness is sworn rather than guessing."

5. A person at the entry point refuses a secondary screening and demands to go straight to their hearing. How do you handle it?

Why they ask

Screening refusals are a common flashpoint. The panel is testing consistency, courtesy and whether you understand that screening rules apply to everyone, including legal practitioners and people with matters waiting.

How to structure your answer

Set out the rule, then your approach to the person, then the escalation path, then the outcome you are aiming for. Keep the tone calm and the boundaries firm.

Example answer

"I would explain that everyone entering the court is screened and that the secondary check is a standard step, not an accusation. I would ask them to step to the side so the queue keeps moving and so they are not being watched by a crowd. If they still refuse, I would explain the consequence plainly: without screening they cannot enter, and I can help them contact the registry or their representative about their matter while they decide. I would stay respectful and avoid arguing. If they continue to refuse or their behaviour escalates, I would call my supervisor and, if needed, the sheriff's officers, and record the incident. What I would not do is wave them through to avoid a scene, because that undermines the whole screening point."

6. How would you explain the court process to a frightened witness who has never been in a courtroom before?

Why they ask

This is the human side of the job. The panel wants to see warmth alongside procedure, and an understanding that court users include victims, children and people with limited English.

How to structure your answer

Describe your approach in stages: first read the person's needs, then explain plainly what happens, then set expectations about your role, then check understanding.

Example answer

"I would introduce myself by name and role so they know who I am, then find out whether they have been to court before and whether anyone is supporting them. I would explain in plain language where they will wait, that they will be called by name, that they will be shown to the witness box, and that I will administer the oath or affirmation before they start. I would tell them they should speak directly to the barrister or the judicial officer when answering, and that if they need a break they can ask. I would keep my voice low and give them time to ask questions, and if there is an interpreter or a victim support officer involved I would make sure that person knows where the witness is sitting. Then I would check back before they are called to make sure nothing has changed."