Data Centre Technician interview questions

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What to expect

Data Centre Technician interviews are practical and specific. Employers are checking that you can work safely and carefully in a live hall, that your hardware knowledge is real rather than theoretical, and that you will be reliable on a shift roster where a single mistake can take a service down.

- **Process and walk-through:** Questions that ask you to describe a routine job end to end, such as racking and cabling a new server, to see whether your method is ordered and repeatable.
- **Behavioural:** Tell me about a time questions that test how you have handled a fault, a mistake or a difficult handover in a previous role.
- **Scenario and judgement under pressure:** A live incident is described, often with incomplete information and limited staff, and you are asked what you would do first.
- **Technical and diagnostic:** Questions that probe how you narrow a fault down to a disk, a controller, a cable or a power path before you touch hardware.
- **Safety, security and compliance:** Questions on electrical safety, working near live equipment, site access rules, change control and your understanding of your own limits.
- **Roster and suitability:** Straight questions about shift work, on-call, physical demands and security clearance, because these decide whether you can do the job as rostered.

Most sites start with a short phone or video screen with a recruiter or the hiring manager to confirm your experience, availability and clearance status. The main interview is usually with a data centre manager plus a senior technician, either on site or by video, and often includes a walk through a hall or a lab. Expect a practical element: identifying components, explaining a cabling standard or talking through a fault from a monitoring screenshot. Government and financial services sites then run police checks and security clearance processes before an offer is confirmed.

1. Walk me through how you would take a new server from delivery to handover in the rack.

Why they ask

This is the core task of the role and the fastest way for an interviewer to see whether your method is safe, ordered and repeatable.

How to structure your answer

Give a chronological walk-through with checkpoints. Cover paperwork and asset recording, physical inspection, rail and rack positioning, power planning across A and B feeds, cabling to the correct switch ports, labelling, firmware and out-of-band setup, then testing and sign-off. Name the standard or change record you work to at each stage.

Example answer

“First I check the delivery against the asset record and the change ticket, confirm the model and serials, and inspect for transit damage before anything is powered. Then I plan the position in the rack with the team, keeping weight distribution and airflow in mind, and check which power feeds are available so the server sits across both A and B. I fit the rails, mount the unit, and connect power, network and management cabling, running each cable to length against the as-built drawings and labelling both ends. I configure the out-of-band management address, confirm firmware is at the approved version, and then power it up and check that it posts and reports correctly in the monitoring platform. Finally I update the asset record, close the change with notes and photos, and hand over to the platform team with the management address and cable positions recorded.”

2. Tell me about a time you found a fault that others had missed.

Why they ask

It tests your attention to detail and whether you investigate rather than simply swapping parts until something works.

How to structure your answer

Use STAR. Be specific about what the symptom was, what everyone assumed, what you checked differently, and what the outcome was for the service.

Example answer

"We had a host that kept dropping off the network for a few seconds at a time, usually overnight. It had been logged a few times and the assumption was a failing network card, so a replacement had been ordered. I took the ticket and started pulling the monitoring history and the out-of-band logs, and what stood out was that the drops lined up with a cooling cycle in that row. I checked the intake temperature at the front of the rack over a week and it was swinging more than it should. I raised it with the facilities team, and a failed fan in one of the cooling units was the cause. Once that was fixed the drops stopped, and we cancelled the unnecessary card replacement. The main thing I took from it was to look at the environment before assuming it is always the hardware in the rack."

3. It is early on a quiet shift and an alert shows the temperature rising in one rack. What do you do?

Why they ask

Environmental faults are common in this role and the interviewer wants to see whether you can prioritise safety and service under pressure without overreacting.

How to structure your answer

Use a judgement-under-pressure structure: make the area safe, confirm the reading, protect the service, escalate, then document. Talk through what you would not do as well as what you would do.

Example answer

"First I check whether the alert is real or a sensor fault by looking at the surrounding readings in the monitoring platform and checking whether other sensors in the same row are climbing. If temperatures are genuinely rising, my priority is the equipment, so I would confirm the cooling unit status and look for anything obvious like a blocked airflow path or a fan failure. If it is a cooling failure I escalate to facilities immediately, because that is theirs to fix, and I would raise it with the on-call manager so decisions about load can be made early. If the temperature keeps climbing and the service is at risk, I would follow the emergency procedure for that site, which may mean migrating critical workloads or shutting down non-essential equipment, but only with authorisation. I would not open a live rack or start moving hardware around without direction. Afterwards I log the timeline, the readings and who I escalated to, so the incident review has a clear record."

4. How do you work out whether a fault is a disk, a controller or a cabling issue before you replace anything?

Why they ask

It separates technicians who understand the hardware from those who swap parts until the alert clears, which matters when every replacement has a cost and a service window.

How to structure your answer

Explain your diagnostic reasoning step by step: what you read first, what you rule out, how you confirm a hypothesis, and when you escalate rather than act.

Example answer

"I start with the management interface, because iLO or iDRAC logs will usually tell you whether the controller or the drive reported the failure first. If a single drive is flagged and the array is degraded, that points to the drive. If multiple drives in the same enclosure drop at once, I look at the enclosure,

the backplane or the controller before pulling any disks, because replacing good drives would make things worse. For anything that looks like a link problem, I check the switch port statistics for errors and the cable run against the as-built records, and I reseat at the patch panel as much as at the server end. If the evidence is unclear or the array is already degraded, I stop and escalate to the storage team with the logs rather than guessing. I only replace parts once I can point to the evidence that says which part failed."

5. Describe how you approach safety and site security when you are working in a live data hall.

Why they ask

Data halls combine electrical risk, restricted access and strict change control, and employers need to know you will not cut corners when you are under time pressure.

How to structure your answer

Cover the categories rather than telling one story: electrical safety, personal protective equipment, access and escort rules, change control, and what you do when something is outside your competence.

Example answer

"I treat the hall as a live electrical environment. I do not work on power paths I am not authorised for, I use the correct PPE, and I keep the walkways and airflows clear. Access is controlled and logged, so I sign in, follow the escort or authorisation rules for that site, and never let anyone in on my badge. Anything that changes production goes through a change record, even something as simple as moving a cable, because the next person needs to know it happened. I also check the risk assessment and lockout procedures before I touch power equipment, and if a job is outside my authorisation, such as electrical work or high-voltage switching, I stop and bring in the licensed person. It is a lot cheaper to wait ten minutes for the right person than to cause an outage."

6. This role runs shift work and an on-call roster. How do you manage that?

Why they ask

Rostering is a genuine part of the job and interviewers want an honest answer about whether you can sustain it, not a rehearsed yes.

How to structure your answer

Answer directly about your experience, how you manage sleep and handovers, and what you need from the roster to do the job well. Be honest about any limits.

Example answer

"I have worked rotating shifts and an on-call roster, so I know how it affects you. I keep a consistent routine around shifts, I do not book anything important on the morning after a night shift, and I make sure my phone and remote access are working well before my on-call week starts. Handover matters more than anything on a shift roster, so I write clear notes on open incidents and what I have already tried, which saves the next person repeating work at two in the morning. I am also comfortable saying when I need support, because staying quiet about a fault you are unsure of is how outages get longer. I am happy to work the roster as it is set out, including weekends and public holidays where it is shared fairly across the team."