

Defence Force Member interview questions

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

What to expect

ADF recruitment interviews sit alongside psychometric testing, medical checks and a fitness assessment, so the interview itself focuses less on technical trivia and more on judgement, motivation and how a candidate operates under structure and pressure. Panels usually include a recruiting officer and sometimes a serving member from the relevant corps or trade stream.

- **Behavioural:** Past examples of teamwork, leadership and handling pressure, assessed against ADF values such as courage, initiative and teamwork.
- **Motivational:** Why the candidate wants to join a specific service and role, and whether their expectations match the reality of military life.
- **Scenario/judgement:** Hypothetical situations testing decision-making, safety awareness and willingness to follow or question orders appropriately.
- **Values and culture fit:** Questions probing how a candidate responds to hierarchy, discipline and the physical and personal demands of service.

Candidates typically move through an online application, aptitude and psychological testing, a medical and fitness assessment, then a panel interview, with some streams adding a group exercise or assessment centre before a final offer and posting decision.

1. Tell me about a time you had to work closely with a team under pressure to get a task done.

Why they ask

Defence roles rely on functioning as part of a unit, often in physically or mentally demanding conditions, so panels want evidence of real teamwork rather than a general claim of being 'a team player'.

How to structure your answer

Use STAR: describe the situation and the pressure involved, your specific task within the team, the action you took, and the result, including what the team achieved together.

Example answer

"During a field training exercise our section had to reposition equipment and set up a temporary base area before a set deadline, in wet conditions with limited daylight left. My task was managing the equipment inventory and directing two other members on loading sequence. I prioritised the heaviest and most weather-sensitive gear first and kept checking off items against the manifest as we moved. We finished the setup on time and had zero equipment left unaccounted for, which the section commander noted in the debrief."

2. Why do you want to join this service and this particular role rather than another trade or corps?

Why they ask

Recruiters want to see the candidate understands the specific demands of the role, not just a general interest in 'the military'.

How to structure your answer

Give a direct, specific answer: what draws you to this trade, one concrete reason grounded in the tasks of the role, and how your background supports it.

Example answer

"I'm drawn to this role because it combines hands-on equipment work with logistics coordination, which matches how I like to work: practical, structured and outcome-focused. I've spent time in roles

that involved maintaining equipment to strict standards, and I want to apply that discipline in a role where the readiness of that equipment actually matters to a team's safety."

3. If you noticed a safety breach during an equipment operation, but the person responsible outranked you, what would you do?

Why they ask

Safety and compliance sit above hierarchy in defence operations, so panels test whether a candidate will raise a genuine risk appropriately rather than stay silent or overreact.

How to structure your answer

Walk through your judgement under pressure: what you'd check first, how you'd raise the issue, who you'd escalate to, and how you'd balance respect for rank with the duty to flag risk.

Example answer

"I'd first confirm what I was seeing was actually a breach and not something I'd misunderstood. If it was clearly unsafe, I'd raise it directly and factually in the moment, focused on the risk rather than the person, and if it wasn't addressed I'd escalate through the correct reporting line afterwards. Safety protocols exist for a reason, and staying quiet to avoid an awkward conversation isn't something I'd be comfortable with."

4. Describe a time you had to follow an instruction you personally disagreed with.

Why they ask

This tests whether a candidate can operate within chain-of-command structures while still being someone who would raise a genuine concern through proper channels.

How to structure your answer

STAR, with emphasis on how you separated your personal view from the requirement to comply, and whether/how you followed up afterward.

Example answer

"In a previous role I was told to change a task order that I thought was less efficient than my original plan. I raised my concern once, clearly and briefly, then carried out the instruction as given once the decision was confirmed. Afterwards, in a debrief setting, I mentioned my original reasoning in case it was useful for next time, but I didn't push back in the moment once the call had been made."

5. Walk me through how you'd check and prepare a piece of equipment before it goes out on an exercise or deployment.

Why they ask

Equipment operation and maintenance is a core task in this role, and this question checks whether the candidate understands process and documentation, not just general mechanical aptitude.

How to structure your answer

Give a step-by-step process walkthrough: what you check first, what reference material you use, how you document faults, and who you report to.

Example answer

"I'd start with the equipment manual and any standing orders for that item, then run through the checklist in sequence rather than from memory. I'd check for visible damage or wear first, then test function against the manual's specifications. Anything that fails gets logged and reported immediately, and I wouldn't sign off equipment as ready unless every checklist item passed."

6. Tell me about a time you had to lead or guide people with less experience than you.

Why they ask

Even junior ranks are expected to mentor newer members and take charge of small tasks, so this checks early leadership behaviour.

How to structure your answer

STAR, focused on how you adjusted your communication and expectations for less experienced team members and what changed as a result.

Example answer

“When two newer members joined my section, I was asked to run them through basic equipment checks before their first exercise. I broke the process into smaller steps rather than assuming prior knowledge, checked in on their understanding rather than just demonstrating once, and had them each run through a check independently while I observed. Both passed their first equipment inspection without any corrections needed.”