

Film and Television Director interview questions

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What to expect

Film and Television Director interviews in Australia usually focus on your creative vision, your ability to lead a set, and how you balance artistic choices with practical constraints. You may be asked to pitch a treatment or walk through your process for a script, and you should be ready to talk about working with producers, cast and crew.

- **Process and vision:** How you develop a script into a visual plan and communicate your creative intent.
- **Collaboration and leadership:** How you work with actors, cinematographers, editors and producers.
- **Behavioural:** Past challenges on set and how you handled them.
- **Scenario and problem-solving:** What you do when something goes wrong during production.
- **Technical craft:** Your approach to camera, lighting and post-production.
- **Safety and compliance:** On-set WHS and Australian screen industry regulations.

Interviews often start with a conversation about your showreel or a specific project on your resume. From there, the panel may move to a hypothetical script extract or a pitch scenario, followed by behavioural questions about leadership and conflict. Some employers include a practical task, such as preparing a shot list or a short treatment. The interview usually ends with your questions for them about the production, the team and the funding or commissioning context.

1. How do you approach turning a script into a visual plan?

Why they ask

This checks whether you have a repeatable creative process and can collaborate with heads of department.

How to structure your answer

Walk through your process step by step: script analysis, character motivation, visual references, shot list, and collaboration with the cinematographer and production designer.

Example answer

"I start by breaking down the script into beats and identifying the emotional arc of each scene. I will create a look book with visual references and discuss it with the cinematographer and production designer. Then I work through a shot list, not to lock everything down but to have a shared language. On set, I stay open to what the actors and the space give us, but the plan keeps us aligned."

2. Tell me about a time you had a creative disagreement with a producer or a lead actor. How did you handle it?

Why they ask

They want to see how you navigate conflict while protecting the story and the working relationships.

How to structure your answer

Use STAR: describe the situation, the task, the action you took, and the result. Focus on listening, collaboration and a constructive outcome.

Example answer

"On a short film, the lead actor felt a key scene was emotionally false. I listened, we rehearsed it a few different ways, and I realised their instinct was right. We adjusted the blocking and the scene played

much more truthfully. It taught me that the best idea can come from anywhere, and my job is to protect the story, not my ego."

3. You are on set and the weather turns, or a key location falls through. What do you do?

Why they ask

This tests your judgement under pressure and your ability to lead a crew when plans change.

How to structure your answer

Show a clear sequence: assess the impact with the first AD and producer, prioritise what can still be shot, communicate the change, and decide on a safe and practical alternative.

Example answer

"First I would check with the first AD and producer about the impact on the schedule. I would look at what we can still shoot in the current conditions, or if we can move to an interior scene. I would communicate the change to the cast and crew clearly, and make sure we are not compromising safety. Then I would work with the heads of department to salvage the day and adjust the call sheet for the next day."

4. How do you work with actors to get the performance you need?

Why they ask

Directing performances is central to the role, and they want to know you can create a safe and productive environment.

How to structure your answer

Describe your method: understanding what each actor needs, using rehearsal, giving specific and playable notes, and protecting their performance in the edit.

Example answer

"I try to understand what each actor needs. Some want to talk through backstory, others want to just do it. I create a safe space for them to try things, and I give notes that are specific and playable. I also protect their performance in the edit, because the best moments are often in the takes where they feel free."

5. What is your experience with post-production, and how do you collaborate with editors?

Why they ask

They need to know you can carry the vision through the edit and work with sound and colour teams.

How to structure your answer

Talk through your process from assembly to lock, how you give notes, and how you communicate with editors, sound designers and colourists.

Example answer

"I see post as the final rewrite. I sit with the editor for the first assembly, then I take time to review cuts on my own before giving notes. I focus on story and pacing, and I trust the editor's craft. I have worked in Avid and Premiere, and I understand how to communicate with sound designers and colourists to protect the vision."

6. How do you ensure safety on set, and what is your understanding of your responsibilities as a director?

Why they ask

Australian productions place a strong emphasis on WHS, and directors are expected to lead by example.

How to structure your answer

State your legal and ethical duty, then give practical steps such as participating in risk assessments and supporting the first AD's authority to stop work.

Example answer

"Safety is everyone's responsibility, but as a director I set the tone. I make sure the first AD and safety officer have the authority to stop work if something is not right. I participate in risk assessments, especially for stunts or weapons, and I follow the MEAA guidelines and production's WHS policies. I never put a shot above the crew's wellbeing."