

Financial Planner interview questions

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What to expect

Financial planner interviews test three things at once: whether you know the regulatory rules cold, whether you can translate technical advice into plain language for a client, and whether your judgement holds up when a client pushes back on advice that isn't in their interest. Given the tightened licensing and education standards in this profession, expect interviewers to probe your compliance grounding as closely as your client skills.

- **Technical/compliance:** Checks your grasp of FASEA standards, ASIC disclosure requirements, the best interests duty and how you document advice.
- **Behavioural:** Past examples of how you've handled client communication, conflicts of interest or difficult conversations.
- **Scenario/judgement:** Hypothetical client situations testing whether you'd hold the line on suitable advice under pressure.
- **Client-facing:** How you explain complex products or strategies to clients with varying levels of financial literacy.

Most processes start with a phone or video screen covering your licensing status, qualifications and current client book size, followed by a panel or one-on-one interview that mixes compliance questions with a scenario or case study. Larger licensees sometimes add a short written exercise, like drafting part of a Statement of Advice, before a final interview with the practice principal or manager.

1. Walk me through how you'd prepare a Statement of Advice for a client approaching retirement.

Why they ask

This checks whether you understand the end-to-end advice process and where compliance obligations sit within it, not just the theory.

How to structure your answer

Answer as a step-by-step process walkthrough: information gathering, analysis, strategy development, documentation, delivery and review.

Example answer

"I'd start with a full fact-find covering their super balances, other assets, income needs and any debt, plus their risk tolerance and retirement timeline. From there I'd model a few strategy options, like transition-to-retirement versus straight account-based pension, and test them against their actual cash flow needs. Once I've settled on a recommendation I draft the Statement of Advice, making sure the reasons for the advice, the fees and any conflicts are clearly disclosed and that it meets the best interests duty. Before sending it out I run it through our internal compliance check, then present it to the client in plain language, walking through why this strategy suits their situation rather than just handing over the document."

2. Tell me about a time you had to explain a complex financial product to a client with low financial literacy.

Why they ask

Tests communication skill and patience, which matters because poor client understanding creates both bad outcomes and compliance risk.

How to structure your answer

STAR: situation, task, action, result.

Example answer

"A client in his sixties was nervous about moving part of his super into an account-based pension because he didn't understand how the drawdowns worked. I put aside the technical language and used a simple analogy, comparing it to a savings account that pays him a regular wage but still grows if the underlying investments perform. I also wrote him a one-page summary he could keep and re-read at home. He came back a week later with much better questions and agreed to the strategy with a clear understanding of the risks, which meant less anxious calls from him later when markets moved."

3. A client insists on an investment you believe doesn't suit their risk profile. What do you do?

Why they ask

This is a judgement test: will you push back appropriately or just process what the client wants to keep them happy.

How to structure your answer

Judgement-under-pressure structure: state the immediate priority, explain the reasoning you'd apply, describe how you'd manage the client relationship without compromising the advice.

Example answer

"My first priority is the best interests duty, so I wouldn't recommend something that doesn't fit their risk profile just because they've asked for it. I'd sit down with the client and walk through exactly why the investment doesn't match their timeframe or risk tolerance, using their own goals as the reference point rather than abstract rules. If they still want to proceed against my advice, I'd document that clearly, including the risks I've outlined, and make sure my licensee's compliance process is followed. I'd rather have an honest conversation upfront than let a client take on risk they haven't properly understood."

4. How do you stay current with regulatory changes affecting financial advice, such as FASEA standards and ASIC requirements?

Why they ask

Given the profession's ongoing licensing and education reform, interviewers want evidence you keep your knowledge current rather than relying on what you learned at qualification.

How to structure your answer

Direct answer covering specific habits and sources, not a generic 'I read a lot' response.

Example answer

"I keep on top of ASIC regulatory guides and updates through our licensee's compliance bulletins, and I do continuing professional development each year that specifically targets any rule changes rather than just topping up hours. When FASEA standards or the Corporations Act requirements shift, I update my Statement of Advice templates and checklists straight away so the change is built into my process rather than something I'm trying to remember case by case."

5. Describe a time you identified a potential conflict of interest in your advice practice and how you handled it.

Why they ask

Conflicts of interest are a core ethical risk in this role, and interviewers want to see you recognise and disclose them rather than ignore them.

How to structure your answer

STAR: situation, task, action, result.

Example answer

"I was recommending a managed fund that also happened to pay a higher ongoing service fee to our practice than a comparable alternative. I flagged it internally, then made sure the Statement of Advice clearly disclosed the fee structure and explained to the client why I still believed the fund suited their goals on performance and risk grounds, not fee arrangements. I also gave them the comparable alternative as a documented option. The client appreciated the transparency and it kept the advice file clean if it were ever reviewed."

6. How do you use tools like Xplan or Midwinter in your day-to-day advice process?

Why they ask

Confirms practical, hands-on familiarity with the software platforms that underpin modelling and SOA production in most advice practices.

How to structure your answer

Process walkthrough describing where the tool fits into your workflow, not just a list of features.

Example answer

"I use Xplan to hold client data and run the initial fact-find, then move into cash flow and retirement modelling within the platform to test different strategy scenarios side by side. Once I've settled on a recommendation, I generate the Statement of Advice draft from the same system so the figures in the document match what I've modelled, then review it manually for anything the template hasn't phrased clearly for the client. It keeps the numbers consistent from the first meeting through to the final document."