

Fingerprint Expert interview questions

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What to expect

Interviews for Fingerprint Expert roles in Australia typically focus on technical methodology, quality assurance and the ability to present evidence clearly. Employers want to see that you can follow procedures, work accurately under pressure and communicate findings to non-specialists.

- **Technical:** Questions about ACE-V, chemical enhancement techniques, AFIS searching and comparison methodology.
- **Behavioural:** Questions that ask for examples of teamwork, handling pressure, and giving evidence in court.
- **Scenario:** Hypothetical situations involving difficult prints, contamination risks or conflicting results.
- **Process and quality:** Questions about chain of custody, quality assurance, documentation and regulatory compliance.
- **Court and communication:** Questions about explaining findings to investigators, lawyers and juries.

The process often starts with a phone or video screening, followed by a panel interview with technical and behavioural questions. Some employers include a practical assessment where you examine a set of prints or describe your approach to a case. Final stages may involve a meeting with a senior forensic manager.

1. Can you walk me through your approach to comparing a latent print with a known specimen?

Why they ask

This tests your understanding of ACE-V and your ability to explain a core technical process clearly.

How to structure your answer

Use a step-by-step walk-through: describe each phase of ACE-V, what you look for at each stage, and how you document your findings.

Example answer

"I start with analysis, looking at the latent print's clarity, distortion and the type of surface it came from. I note ridge flow, level two detail like bifurcations and ridge endings, and level three detail such as pores if visible. Then I move to comparison, placing the latent and known print side by side and looking for agreement in ridge structure. Next is evaluation, where I decide whether the prints are from the same source, different sources, or inconclusive. Finally, I have a second examiner verify my conclusion independently. Throughout, I document every step so the comparison can be reviewed."

2. You recover a partial latent print from a surface that is difficult to enhance. What do you do?

Why they ask

This checks your problem-solving and knowledge of enhancement techniques.

How to structure your answer

Assess the surface, choose a technique, document your reasoning, and consider consultation or alternative methods.

Example answer

"First I identify the surface type, whether it is porous, non-porous or something unusual like adhesive tape. For a non-porous surface, I might start with cyanoacrylate fuming or a forensic light source. If

the print is still faint, I could try a dye stain or physical developer. I always document what I tried and why, because that record matters if the case goes to court. If I am unsure, I consult a senior examiner or try a different sequence on a test surface first. The key is to avoid destroying the print and to keep a clear chain of custody."

3. Tell me about a time you had to defend your findings under cross-examination in court.

Why they ask

This assesses your resilience, communication skills and understanding of expert evidence.

How to structure your answer

Use STAR: describe the situation, the task, the action you took, and the result.

Example answer

"In a recent case, I had identified a latent print from a window frame as matching the defendant. The defence barrister challenged my enhancement technique, suggesting I had contaminated the print. I stayed calm and explained each step I had taken, referring to my notes and the laboratory's quality procedures. I clarified why the technique I used was appropriate for that surface and why contamination was not possible given my controls. The judge accepted my evidence, and the defendant was convicted. It taught me to prepare thoroughly and to explain technical points in plain language."

4. How do you use AFIS to search latent prints, and what steps do you take to ensure accuracy?

Why they ask

This tests your familiarity with NEC AFIS and your attention to detail.

How to structure your answer

Walk through the process from coding to candidate review, emphasising verification and documentation.

Example answer

"I code the latent print by marking ridge flow, core and delta, and any clear minutiae. I then submit the search. When candidates come back, I compare each one visually against the latent, looking for agreement in ridge detail. I do not rely on the system's score alone; I always conduct a full comparison. If I find a possible match, I have a second examiner verify it before reporting. I also document the search parameters and the candidates I reviewed, so the process is transparent."

5. What is your approach to maintaining chain of custody and quality assurance when handling evidence?

Why they ask

This checks your procedural discipline and understanding of forensic standards.

How to structure your answer

Describe your routine: labelling, recording, storage, and compliance with laboratory protocols.

Example answer

"When I receive an exhibit, I record its details, including the case number and my initials, and I note any seals or packaging. I store it in a secure location and log every time it is accessed. If I enhance or examine the item, I document the technique, date and time. I follow the laboratory's quality procedures, which are aligned with NATA and ISO 17025 requirements. If there is any break in the chain, I report it immediately. My goal is to ensure the evidence is admissible and reliable."

6. Describe a time you worked with investigators or laboratory staff to solve a complex case.

Why they ask

This assesses your teamwork and communication skills in a forensic context.

How to structure your answer

Use STAR, focusing on collaboration and the outcome.

Example answer

"A series of burglaries had no suspects, and investigators asked me to re-examine some evidence. I worked with a crime scene officer to identify surfaces that had not been tested, and I used a different enhancement sequence. I found a partial print on a door handle that matched a known offender in AFIS. I then coordinated with the investigating officer to confirm the suspect's whereabouts. The match helped link the offender to multiple scenes. The case showed me how important it is to share findings clearly and to work as part of a wider team."