

Forklift Operator interview questions

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What to expect

Interviews for forklift operator roles are practical rather than theoretical. Employers want to confirm your licence is current, understand how you handle equipment faults and hazards, and get a sense of how you work under time pressure in a busy warehouse.

- **Compliance and licensing:** Direct questions confirming your High Risk Work Licence class, currency, and any endorsements, since this is a legal requirement to operate.
- **Process:** Walk-through questions about routine tasks like pre-shift checks, loading sequences, or stock recording.
- **Safety:** Questions probing how you spot and respond to hazards, unstable loads, or mechanical faults.
- **Behavioural:** Past-experience questions about teamwork, communication, or handling mistakes on the floor.
- **Scenario:** Judgement questions presenting a live problem, such as competing priorities or an unstable pallet, to see how you'd react.

Most interviews start with a check of your licence and ticket details, then move into questions about your day-to-day experience with specific equipment. Expect at least one or two scenario questions to test judgement, and some workplaces will follow up with a short practical assessment on-site or a site induction walkthrough before an offer is confirmed.

1. What class of High Risk Work Licence do you hold, and what equipment does it cover?

Why they ask

This confirms you're legally able to operate the forklifts used on site and whether any gaps exist, such as reach truck endorsements.

How to structure your answer

Give a direct, factual answer: state your licence class, what equipment it covers, and mention any recent renewal or additional tickets.

Example answer

"I hold an LF class High Risk Work Licence, which covers order-picking forklifts and counterbalance trucks up to the rated capacity. I've also operated reach trucks under supervision and I'm happy to complete any site-specific induction or refresher your business requires."

2. Can you walk me through your pre-shift forklift checks?

Why they ask

Pre-shift checks are a routine but critical task, and the answer shows whether you actually follow the process or just say you do.

How to structure your answer

Walk through the check in the order you'd actually perform it, from arrival to first load.

Example answer

"I start with a visual check of the tyres, forks, and mast for damage, then check fluid levels and the horn, lights, and reverse alarm. I test the brakes and steering at low speed before picking up any load, and I check the seatbelt and overhead guard are intact. If I find a fault, I tag the machine out of service and report it to my supervisor straight away rather than working around it."

3. Tell me about a time you spotted a hazard or fault before it caused a problem.

Why they ask

This tests whether you're proactive about safety rather than just reactive when something goes wrong.

How to structure your answer

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

Example answer

"During a shift I noticed a reach truck's forks were sitting slightly off level after a knock earlier in the day. I stopped using it, tagged it out, and reported it to the maintenance team instead of continuing to work with it. They found a bent fork carriage that would have caused load instability. It meant one truck was down for a few hours, but it avoided a dropped load or worse."

4. You're halfway through stacking a pallet in a high rack and it looks unstable. What do you do?

Why they ask

This checks judgement under pressure and whether safety takes priority over keeping pace with the pick list.

How to structure your answer

Talk through the immediate decision, the safe sequence of actions, and how you'd communicate it to others.

Example answer

"I'd stop the lift where it is if it's safe to do so, lower the load carefully rather than push forward, and clear the area around me. Once it's grounded safely, I'd reassess the pallet, check for uneven weight or damaged wrapping, and re-stack it properly before continuing. I'd also let my supervisor know if the racking or pallet itself looked like the cause, so it doesn't happen again on the next load."

5. How do you prioritise when trucks are waiting to be unloaded and you've also got a pick list due?

Why they ask

Warehouses run on competing deadlines, and this shows how you manage workload without cutting corners.

How to structure your answer

Explain your reasoning process for weighing urgency, not just a list of steps.

Example answer

"I'd check whether the trucks are on a fixed turnaround time, since holding up a driver can back up the whole yard, whereas a pick list often has more flexibility within the shift. I'd let my supervisor or team leader know what I'm prioritising and why, so nothing gets missed, and I'd knock over the truck unload first if it's time-critical, then get back onto picking."

6. Tell me about a time you disagreed with a co-worker about how a task should be done on the floor.

Why they ask

Warehouses rely on operators working closely together, and this checks how you handle friction without it affecting safety or output.

How to structure your answer

Use STAR, focusing on how the disagreement was resolved and what you'd do differently if anything.

Example answer

"A co-worker wanted to stack a mixed pallet in a way I thought would make it unstable during transport. I explained my concern about the weight distribution and suggested we check the loading guide together. We restacked it his way with one adjustment, and it went out without issue. I try to raise concerns directly and quickly rather than letting them sit, since it's usually a quick fix once you talk it through."