

Freight Handler interview questions

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What to expect

Freight handler interviews are practical and safety-focused. Employers want to know you can read a manifest, handle freight without injuring yourself or others, and stay accurate when the dock is busy. Expect questions about equipment, load restraint and what you do when something does not match the paperwork.

- **Process questions:** Step-by-step questions about how you receive, check, scan and despatch freight, and how you complete handover paperwork.
- **Safety and compliance questions:** Questions on manual handling, forklift operation around pedestrians, load restraint and chain of responsibility duties.
- **Behavioural questions:** Tell me about a time questions covering damaged freight, tight deadlines, shift handovers and working with a team.
- **Scenario questions:** Short situations that test judgement under pressure, such as a driver waiting while a load is still being checked.
- **Practical or site questions:** Some employers run a walk-through of the dock or a short practical assessment on the forklift or scanner as part of the process.

Most freight handler interviews start with a short phone screen covering availability, shift preferences and licences, including your forklift high risk work licence and any site access card. The main interview is usually on site with a depot supervisor or operations manager, and often includes a walk-through of the dock so they can see how you move around freight and equipment. Safety questions run throughout rather than in one block. Many employers finish with a pre-employment medical, a drug and alcohol screen and a check of your right to work, so be ready for those to follow a successful interview.

1. Walk me through how you receive a delivery and check it against the manifest.

Why they ask

This is the core of the job. Employers want to hear a repeatable sequence that includes checking, scanning and reporting, not a vague description of unloading a truck.

How to structure your answer

Give a clear step-by-step walk-through in order: arrival and paperwork, scanning and counting, checking condition, then what happens when something does not match. Name the tools you use at each step.

Example answer

"First I check the delivery docket against the manifest before anything comes off the truck, so I know what should be on board. Then I scan each consignment as it comes off and count the cartons or pallets against the paperwork. I check the condition as I go, looking for crushed corners, torn wrapping or water damage, and I note anything that looks off. If a line does not match, I set that freight aside in the discrepancy area, photograph it and let the supervisor know before it goes anywhere near putaway. Once the load is checked, I sign the docket, record it in the WMS and the freight moves to the next stage."

2. Tell me about a time you found damaged or mislabelled freight. What did you do?

Why they ask

It tests whether you notice detail and follow the reporting process rather than letting a problem travel down the supply chain.

How to structure your answer

Use STAR. Keep the situation brief, spend most of your answer on what you did and why, and finish with the outcome for the customer or the load.

Example answer

"I was scanning inbound pallets on a night shift and one label did not match the manifest, the consignment number was close but not the same. I stopped that pallet, checked it against the paperwork twice and found it belonged to a different run heading interstate. I told my supervisor straight away and we relabelled it and held it back for the correct truck. The freight reached the right customer on time instead of being sent hundreds of kilometres in the wrong direction, and we started double checking similar consignment numbers at the scan point after that."

3. You are half way through checking a load and the driver is telling you he needs to leave now. What do you do?

Why they ask

Freight handlers face this constantly. The interviewer is testing whether you can manage pressure without cutting safety or accuracy corners.

How to structure your answer

Show your judgement under pressure: acknowledge the person, decide what can and cannot be compromised, communicate clearly, and escalate if the pressure continues.

Example answer

"I would tell the driver where I am up to and give him a realistic time, then keep checking at a steady pace rather than rushing and missing something. I would not skip the scan or the damage check, because a missed discrepancy costs more time later than it saves now. If he keeps pushing, I would let my supervisor know so they can decide whether to hold the truck or reorganise the run. In most cases a quick, honest update keeps everyone calm, and the load still leaves correctly checked."

4. What does safe load restraint mean to you, and how do you apply it?

Why they ask

Load restraint and chain of responsibility are legal duties, not preferences. Employers need to know you understand that an unrestrained or badly stacked load is a risk to the driver and everyone else on the road.

How to structure your answer

Define it in plain terms, then describe your actual practice: weight distribution, stacking, wrapping, straps and checking before the doors close.

Example answer

"To me it means the load cannot move, shift or fall no matter how the truck brakes or corners. In practice that starts with how I stack, heavier items low and evenly distributed, and no gaps that let a pallet slide. I wrap and strap pallets properly and use the correct restraints for the load type, and I check the whole thing again before the doors close. If something looks unstable I fix it then rather than hoping it holds. Under chain of responsibility everyone who touches the freight shares that duty, including me."

5. How do you operate a forklift safely in a yard where pedestrians and trucks are moving around?

Why they ask

This combines equipment competence with awareness of others. Interviewers listen for specific habits, not just a claim that you are safe.

How to structure your answer

Answer as a set of habits and checks: pre-start, speed and load discipline, communication with pedestrians, and what you do when conditions change.

Example answer

"I do a pre-start check before I get on, brakes, horn, lights, tyres and forks, and I report anything wrong instead of driving around it. Out in the yard I keep the load low, travel at a walking pace in busy areas and use the horn at blind corners and doorways. I make eye contact with pedestrians before I move past them and I never assume someone has seen me. If the yard gets congested or the weather cuts visibility, I slow down further and let the supervisor know if I think the area needs to be cleared before I keep going."

6. Describe a time you had to stay accurate through a long or busy shift.

Why they ask

Freight handling is shift based and repetitive, and accuracy tends to slip when people get tired. This question checks your self-management.

How to structure your answer

Use STAR, but focus on the personal strategies you used, such as pacing, checks, hydration, breaks and asking for help, and tie it back to the result.

Example answer

"We had a run of late trucks come in together on a Friday night and the whole dock was scanning at once. About three quarters of the way through I noticed my counts were getting sloppy, so I slowed down, rechecked the last few pallets I had scanned and found one I had logged against the wrong docket. I told my supervisor, we fixed it before it went out, and I kept to a steady rhythm for the rest of the shift rather than trying to catch up in a rush. The load went out complete and the paperwork matched at handover."