

Greenkeeper interview questions

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What to expect

Greenkeeping interviews combine practical turf knowledge with safety awareness and teamwork. Employers want to know you can keep surfaces playable and presentable, often under time pressure and in changing weather.

- **Technical turf knowledge:** Questions about mowing heights, irrigation, fertilising, renovation and turf health.
- **Equipment and irrigation:** How you operate and maintain reel mowers, controllers and soil moisture meters.
- **Safety and risk:** Your approach to WHS, chemical handling and machinery safety.
- **Scenario and problem solving:** What you would do when something goes wrong, such as a broken irrigation head before play.
- **Behavioural and teamwork:** Examples of working in a crew, handling early starts and communicating with others.
- **Motivation and fit:** Why you want to work at this course or sports ground and how you handle the roster.

The process often starts with a phone screen with the head greenkeeper, followed by a site tour and practical questions on the course. A final panel may include the course superintendent and a human resources representative. Expect questions on mowing heights, irrigation scheduling, renovation practices and how you handle early starts and weekend work.

1. Walk me through how you would prepare a green for a major competition.

Why they ask

This tests your process knowledge and attention to detail for a high-pressure event.

How to structure your answer

Use a step-by-step walk-through: start with the day before, then morning-of tasks, then final checks. Cover mowing, irrigation, rolling, hole cutting and bunker raking.

Example answer

"The day before, I would check the soil moisture and adjust irrigation to avoid softness. On the morning, I would mow the green to the competition height, typically around 3 millimetres, then roll it to smooth the surface. I would cut a new hole in a fresh position, repair any pitch marks, and rake the bunkers. Just before play, I would check the flag and hole edges, and make sure the green is free of debris. If weather changes, I would adjust irrigation or mowing timing to keep the surface consistent."

2. Tell me about a time you had to deal with a turf disease or pest outbreak.

Why they ask

This checks your diagnostic skills, knowledge of treatments, and ability to act quickly.

How to structure your answer

Use STAR: Situation, Task, Action, Result. Be specific about the disease or pest, what you did, and the outcome.

Example answer

"At my last course, we noticed dollar spot appearing on several greens in early summer. My task was to contain it before it spread to the fairways. I identified the disease by the small, straw-coloured patches and checked the weather forecast for humidity. I adjusted the irrigation schedule to water

deeper and less often, applied a fungicide according to label rates, and increased mowing height slightly to reduce stress. Within two weeks, the patches stopped spreading and the greens recovered. I then kept a closer eye on moisture levels to prevent a repeat."

3. How do you decide when to irrigate, and what tools do you use to check soil moisture?

Why they ask

This tests your technical knowledge of irrigation and soil moisture monitoring.

How to structure your answer

Explain your decision-making process: check soil moisture, weather forecast, turf condition, then use tools. Mention specific tools like soil moisture meters and controllers.

Example answer

"I start by checking the soil moisture with a handheld meter or by pushing a probe into the green. I also look at the turf for signs of wilt, like foot printing or a dull colour. I check the weather forecast for rain and temperature. If the moisture is low and no rain is expected, I run the irrigation system, usually using Toro or Rain Bird controllers, and I adjust run times based on the reading. I prefer to water deeply and infrequently to encourage deep roots. After watering, I recheck the moisture to make sure it is at the right level."

4. Describe a situation where you had to manage a safety risk while operating machinery.

Why they ask

Safety is critical in greenkeeping, with mowers, chemicals and heavy equipment.

How to structure your answer

Use STAR but focus on the risk assessment and the action you took. Highlight your knowledge of WHS and equipment safety.

Example answer

"I was mowing a fairway when I noticed a broken guard on the reel mower. The task was to finish the fairway before play, but I knew the guard could expose the blades. I stopped the mower immediately and tagged it out of service. I reported the fault to my supervisor and used a different mower to finish the job. I also completed a pre-start check on all mowers the next morning. As a result, we avoided a potential injury and kept the maintenance schedule on track."

5. You notice a broken irrigation head on the 7th fairway just before a busy Saturday morning. What do you do?

Why they ask

This tests your judgement under pressure and ability to prioritise.

How to structure your answer

Use a judgement-under-pressure structure: assess the problem, consider play impact, take temporary action, plan permanent fix, communicate.

Example answer

"First, I would isolate the irrigation zone to stop water pooling on the fairway. I would check if the break is causing a safety hazard or major wet patch. If it is minor, I would mark the area with a cone and inform the pro shop so players can be directed around it. If it is major, I would shut off the water to that zone and arrange for a repair after play, or call in the on-call technician. I would document the issue and make sure it is fixed before the next irrigation cycle. Throughout, I would keep the course superintendent informed."

6. Why do you want to work at [Company Name] as a greenkeeper?

Why they ask

This checks your motivation and whether you have researched the employer.

How to structure your answer

Motivation and fit: show you know the course or organisation, connect your skills to their needs, and be genuine.

Example answer

"I have followed [Company Name] for a while and admire the standard of your greens, especially how they hold up through the summer. I want to work at a course that invests in turf quality and gives greenkeepers the tools to do the job properly. My experience with renovation and irrigation would let me contribute to that standard. I also value working in a team that takes safety and presentation seriously, and I am ready for the early starts and weekend rosters that come with the role."