

Grip interview questions

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What to expect

Grip interviews tend to focus on safety, practical rigging knowledge and how you work under pressure with other departments. Employers want to know you can handle the equipment, follow WHS requirements and stay calm when schedules shift.

- **Safety and process:** Questions about risk assessments, working at heights, load calculations and site-specific safety procedures. These test whether you default to safe practice every time.
- **Technical and equipment:** Questions about rigging cranes, dollies, tripods and lighting stands, including maintenance and repair. Expect specific questions about gear you have used.
- **Behavioural and teamwork:** Questions that ask for examples of collaborating with camera and lighting departments, solving problems on set and communicating under pressure.
- **Scenario and judgement:** Hypothetical situations such as equipment failure mid-shoot, tight schedules or difficult locations. These assess how you prioritise safety, speed and communication.

A typical interview starts with a phone or video screen with a key grip or production manager. If you progress, there may be a second interview on set or at a workshop where you walk through equipment and answer practical questions. Some employers include a short practical test, such as rigging a dolly or demonstrating a safe crane setup. The conversation usually moves from your experience to safety scenarios and then to how you fit with the crew.

1. Walk me through your process for rigging a camera crane on an outdoor location with uneven ground.

Why they ask

This is a core grip task. The interviewer wants to see a structured, safety-led approach rather than a rushed setup.

How to structure your answer

Use a step-by-step walk-through: site assessment, load calculation, base preparation, assembly, safety checks, communication with the camera department, and final test before the shot.

Example answer

"First I assess the ground and the surrounding area for slope, soft spots and overhead hazards. I calculate the load based on the crane and camera package, then choose the right base plates or ballast. I prepare the ground if needed, assemble the crane according to the manufacturer's manual, and double-check every pin and lock. Before the camera goes on, I run a test lift and communicate with the camera operator about the planned move. I also make sure the area is cordoned off so no one walks under the load. Only then do I give the go-ahead to mount the camera."

2. Tell me about a time you had to solve a problem on set when a piece of grip equipment failed mid-shoot.

Why they ask

Grips are expected to troubleshoot quickly without stopping production. This shows your problem-solving and composure.

How to structure your answer

Use STAR: describe the situation, the task you had, the action you took, and the result. Focus on how you kept the shoot going safely.

Example answer

"We were on a location shoot and a dolly wheel seized halfway through a tracking shot. The director wanted to keep the take, so I quickly assessed the wheel and found a cracked bearing. I had a spare wheel in the truck, so I swapped it out while the first assistant director held the set. I checked the track for debris that might have caused the crack, cleaned it and re-ran the move. The result was we completed the shot without losing the light, and I logged the bearing failure so the equipment could be serviced before the next day."

3. You are on a set with a tight schedule and the director wants a dolly shot that requires moving a track quickly. How do you handle it?

Why they ask

This tests how you balance speed with safety and how you communicate with other departments under pressure.

How to structure your answer

Use a judgement-under-pressure structure: acknowledge the pressure, assess safety first, communicate clearly with the relevant crew, prioritise the safest efficient method, then execute and confirm.

Example answer

"I would first acknowledge the director's need for speed but make it clear that safety comes first. I would quickly assess the new track path for obstacles, level changes and cable runs. If the path is clear, I would call on the best boy and any available crew to lay the track in sections, making sure each section is pinned and levelled. I would keep the camera department informed of the progress so they can prep the camera. Once the track is secure, I would do a quick test pass with the dolly before the camera goes on. That way we move fast without cutting corners."

4. What is your approach to maintaining and repairing grip equipment to ensure it is ready for the next shoot day?

Why they ask

Grips are responsible for the condition of their gear. This question checks your routine and attention to detail.

How to structure your answer

Use a process structure: describe your daily and weekly checks, how you log issues, how you handle repairs, and how you communicate with the key grip or production.

Example answer

"At the end of each shoot day I do a visual check of all the gear I used, looking for wear on straps, cracks in hardware, or damage to dolly wheels. I wipe down and lubricate moving parts as needed. If I find a fault, I tag it and log it in the equipment register so it does not go out again until it is fixed. For minor repairs I will do them myself if I have the parts and skills. For anything major I report it to the key grip and arrange for a specialist. Before the next shoot day I test everything I can, especially cranes and dollies, so there are no surprises on set."

5. Describe a time you had to collaborate closely with the lighting department to secure a rig. How did you ensure safety and efficiency?

Why they ask

Grips and lighting crews work together constantly. The interviewer wants to see you can coordinate without friction.

How to structure your answer

Use STAR, focusing on the communication and joint safety checks that made the collaboration work.

Example answer

"We were rigging a large lighting setup on a sound stage with limited ceiling points. The gaffer and I walked the space together to plan where the stands and trusses would go. I checked the load capacity of each point and made sure the stands were properly secured and sandbagged. We agreed on a sequence so the lighting crew could hang fixtures while I secured the rigging underneath. I kept checking that no one was working under an unsecured load. The result was we rigged the whole set in half a day with no incidents, and the gaffer asked me to work on his next production."

6. What safety procedures do you follow when working at heights to secure lighting stands or rigging hardware?

Why they ask

Working at heights is a major risk in this role. This question confirms you know the Australian WHS requirements and apply them.

How to structure your answer

Use a safety procedure structure: cite the relevant regulations and codes of practice, then list your steps in order from risk assessment to fall protection and rescue planning.

Example answer

"I start with a risk assessment for the specific task and location, checking for overhead hazards, ground conditions and the stability of the structure I am climbing. Under the Work Health and Safety Act and the relevant codes of practice, I make sure I have the right fall protection, such as a harness and lanyard attached to a certified anchor point. I use a ladder or elevating work platform correctly, maintaining three points of contact. I never work alone at height if I can avoid it, and I have a rescue plan in case something goes wrong. I also check that all tools are tethered so they cannot fall on the crew below."