

Hairdresser interview questions

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What to expect

Hairdresser interviews usually combine a conversation about your background with some form of practical assessment, since employers want to see technique as well as hear about it. Expect questions on technical process, client handling and salon hygiene, often followed by a working trial.

- **Process:** Questions asking you to walk through how you'd handle a specific technical task, such as a consultation or colour treatment, step by step.
- **Behavioural:** Questions about past situations, particularly difficult clients or mistakes, drawing on your actual work history.
- **Scenario:** Hypothetical client situations that test judgement under pressure, such as a colour result gone wrong before an event.
- **Safety and hygiene:** Questions on infection control, chemical handling and salon hygiene standards required in a working salon.
- **Client-facing:** Questions about building rapport, client retention and retail or additional-service recommendations.

Expect a short conversation about your background and qualifications first, followed by technical and scenario questions. Many salons then run a practical trial, either on the day or at a follow-up session, involving a cut, blow-dry or colour application. Some employers also ask whether you have an existing clientele that would follow you.

1. Walk me through how you'd handle a consultation for a client wanting a significant colour change.

Why they ask

This checks whether you follow a proper process for consultation, colour safety and managing client expectations, which is central to the role.

How to structure your answer

Answer as a step-by-step walkthrough: what you ask the client first, how you assess hair condition and history, when you'd do a patch test, how you choose product and technique, and how you set expectations before starting.

Example answer

"I start by asking what they're hoping for and why, and I look at photos if they have any. Then I check the hair's current condition and colour history, including any recent chemical treatments, because that affects what's actually achievable safely. If it's a first-time colour or a big change, I always do a patch test in advance and explain why. I talk through realistic options, including if I think the result needs to happen over two appointments rather than one session, and I make sure they understand the maintenance involved before I start."

2. Tell me about a time you had to deal with a difficult or unhappy client.

Why they ask

Client management is a daily part of the job and employers want evidence you can de-escalate a situation without losing the client.

How to structure your answer

Use STAR: describe the situation, your specific task, the action you took to resolve it, and the result for the client relationship.

Example answer

"A client once came back unhappy because the colour had faded faster than she expected. I listened first rather than getting defensive, then checked what aftercare products she was using at home, which turned out to be the main issue. I offered a complimentary toner refresh and talked her through a better home care routine. She stayed a regular client afterwards and started buying the recommended products, so it worked out well for both of us."

3. A client's colour has come out patchy or the wrong tone right before they need to leave for an event. What do you do?

Why they ask

This is a judgement-under-pressure scenario common in salons, testing technical problem solving and how you communicate under stress.

How to structure your answer

Describe your immediate assessment of the hair and time available, the realistic options you'd weigh up, the decision you'd make, and how you'd communicate it to the client calmly.

Example answer

"First I'd check exactly how much time we have and assess whether the issue is tone, patchiness or both. If there's enough time, I'd do a quick corrective toner rather than attempting a full recolour, since that's safer and faster. If time's too tight for a proper fix, I'd be upfront with the client about what's realistic, offer styling tricks to minimise the issue for the event, and book them in properly afterwards. Staying calm and honest matters more than promising a fix I can't deliver safely."

4. What steps do you take to maintain hygiene and infection control between clients?

Why they ask

Salons are regulated on hygiene and safety, so employers need confidence you'll follow proper protocols without being reminded.

How to structure your answer

List the standard procedures in the order you'd actually apply them during a normal shift.

Example answer

"I sterilise or disinfect tools between every client, use fresh gowns and towels, and wash or sanitise my hands regularly through the day. Anything that can't be sterilised, like certain single-use items, gets disposed of properly. I also keep an eye on things like clean workstations and properly stored chemicals, since that's as much a part of the job as the styling itself."

5. How do you approach recommending retail products or additional services without feeling pushy?

Why they ask

Retail and upselling are part of salon revenue, and employers want to see you can do this in a way that keeps clients comfortable.

How to structure your answer

Explain your general approach and reasoning, then give a concrete example of how it plays out with a client.

Example answer

"I only recommend something if I think it'll solve a problem the client mentioned, like frizz or colour fade. I'll explain why a product would help their specific hair rather than just listing what's on the shelf. If someone says no, I leave it there. Clients tend to trust the recommendation more when it's tied to what they actually said in the chair, and they come back for the product themselves later."

6. How do you keep your technical skills current?

Why they ask

Employers are keen to know you're keeping pace with technique and trends rather than relying on qualification alone.

How to structure your answer

Describe your ongoing learning habits and give one specific recent example of a technique or product system you've picked up.

Example answer

"I try to do at least one hands-on training session or brand workshop a year, usually through the colour or product supplier we use in the salon, since that's where the newest techniques show up first. Recently I did a session on balayage placement for finer hair types, which I've since used with a few clients who wanted a softer, more natural result than a traditional foil application gives."