

Helicopter Pilot interview questions

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What to expect

Interviews for helicopter pilot roles focus on your technical knowledge, safety judgement and ability to work with others in high-pressure situations. You will likely meet a chief pilot, operations manager and possibly an HR representative.

- **Technical:** Questions about aircraft systems, navigation, flight planning and CASA regulations.
- **Scenario:** Hypothetical situations that test your decision-making under pressure, such as weather changes or mechanical issues.
- **Behavioural:** Past experiences that show how you handle teamwork, fatigue and difficult passengers.
- **Safety:** How you identify and manage risks, including fatigue, fuel and terrain.
- **Client-facing:** How you communicate with passengers and represent the company.

The interview usually starts with introductions and a walk through your logbook and experience. Then the panel asks a mix of technical and scenario questions. You may be asked to explain a specific procedure or how you would handle a particular flight. The interview often ends with your questions for them. It typically lasts 45 to 60 minutes.

1. Walk me through your pre-flight inspection and weight and balance process for a typical charter flight.

Why they ask

This tests your attention to detail and understanding of safe operating limits.

How to structure your answer

Use a step-by-step walk-through. Start with the walk-around, then cockpit checks, then weight and balance calculations, and finish with how you confirm the aircraft is within limits.

Example answer

"First, I conduct a thorough walk-around, checking the airframe, rotor blades, fuel levels and any obvious damage. Inside the cockpit, I run through the pre-start checklist, checking instruments and avionics. Then I calculate weight and balance using the load sheet, passenger weights and fuel load. I use the helicopter's centre of gravity limits to ensure we are within range. If anything is outside limits, I adjust fuel or redistribute baggage before departure. I also check the weather and NOTAMs at this stage. Once everything is confirmed, I sign off the flight plan and proceed."

2. Tell me about a time you had to make a difficult decision in flight due to changing weather.

Why they ask

This shows how you assess risk and act under pressure.

How to structure your answer

Use STAR: Situation, Task, Action, Result.

Example answer

"I was flying a charter flight to a remote property when a front moved in faster than forecast. The clouds were lowering and visibility was dropping. I had two passengers on board and enough fuel to return to base. I made the decision to turn back rather than continue through the pass. I informed the passengers and air traffic control, and we returned safely to base. The result was that we avoided a potentially dangerous situation, and the passengers appreciated the clear communication. I later reviewed the forecast to see what I had missed and learned to build in more buffer."

3. You're flying an aeromedical retrieval and encounter unexpected icing conditions. What do you do?

Why they ask

This tests your technical knowledge and judgement in an emergency.

How to structure your answer

Assess the situation, decide on the safest action, and act. Explain your priorities: fly the aircraft, communicate, then manage the problem.

Example answer

"First, I would maintain control of the aircraft and avoid abrupt manoeuvres. I would turn on anti-ice systems if available and try to climb or descend to a temperature where icing is less likely. I would inform air traffic control of the situation and request a clearance to a lower altitude or a different route. If icing continues, I would divert to the nearest suitable airport. Throughout, I would monitor the aircraft's performance and be prepared to land as soon as possible. The safety of the patient and crew is paramount."

4. How do you plan a flight using OzRunways and ForeFlight, and what factors do you consider for fuel and alternate planning?

Why they ask

This checks your technical proficiency and understanding of flight planning tools.

How to structure your answer

Explain your process in a logical order, from entering the route to calculating fuel and alternates.

Example answer

"I start by entering the departure and destination into OzRunways or ForeFlight, then select the appropriate route and altitude. I check the weather, NOTAMs and airspace restrictions. For fuel, I calculate the trip fuel, then add reserves for alternate, holding and any contingencies. I plan at least one alternate airport within reach, considering weather and fuel. I also check the performance of the helicopter for the weight and conditions. After planning, I brief the passengers and crew, and I file the flight plan if required. I keep a paper backup in case the tablet fails."

5. Describe how you manage fatigue on a rostered day with multiple legs.

Why they ask

This shows your safety awareness and self-management.

How to structure your answer

Use a problem-solving approach: identify the risks, then explain the strategies you use.

Example answer

"On a day with multiple legs, fatigue can build up. I start by ensuring I get proper rest before the duty. During the day, I use the time between flights to eat, hydrate and stretch. I monitor my own alertness and that of my crew. If I feel fatigue affecting my performance, I would speak up and consider delaying a leg or swapping with another pilot. I also use checklists to stay focused and avoid complacency. After the day, I log my hours and note any fatigue issues. The key is to recognise the signs early and act."

6. How do you handle a nervous passenger on a scenic flight?

Why they ask

This tests your client-facing skills and empathy.

How to structure your answer

Use a communication framework: acknowledge, reassure, inform, and check in.

Example answer

"First, I acknowledge their nervousness and reassure them that it's normal. I explain what they can expect during the flight, including the sounds and sensations. I show them how to use the headset and point out the exits. During the flight, I keep a calm tone and point out landmarks to distract them. I check in regularly to see how they're doing. If they become very distressed, I would consider cutting the flight short. The goal is to make the experience enjoyable and safe."