

Jeweller interview questions

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What to expect

Jeweller interviews mix a look at your finished work with questions about how you actually handle the bench, the client and the occasional disaster. Expect a portfolio or sample review alongside conversation, and sometimes a short practical task if the workshop has the setup for it.

- **Process/technical:** Questions asking you to walk through a specific bench technique step by step, such as soldering, setting or polishing.
- **Behavioural:** Questions about past experience, usually mistakes, repairs or client situations, answered with a specific example.
- **Scenario/judgement:** Hypothetical client or workshop situations testing how you balance client expectations against what's actually achievable on the metal.
- **Safety:** Questions on handling torches, chemicals, polishing compounds and general workshop safety practice.
- **Client-facing:** Questions about consultations, translating vague requests into designs, and managing expectations on cost or turnaround.

Most interviews open with a look through your portfolio or repair samples, move into technical questions about specific techniques and tools, then cover a couple of scenario or client-handling questions before wrapping up with logistics like availability and, where relevant, apprenticeship or trade qualification checks.

1. Walk me through how you'd solder a repair join on a gold ring without damaging any stones already set in it.

Why they ask

This checks whether you actually understand heat control and sequencing on a piece with real constraints, not just that you can solder in isolation.

How to structure your answer

Step-by-step process walkthrough: preparation, heat management, order of operations, and how you check the join afterwards.

Example answer

"First I'd check what stones are in the ring and whether they can handle heat. If there's anything heat-sensitive nearby, I'd wrap it in a wet cloth or use a heat sink paste to protect it. I'd clean the join area, apply flux, and use a small torch tip so I can direct heat precisely rather than flooding the whole shank. I'd feed solder from the opposite side to the flame so it flows into the join rather than pooling on top. Once it's cooled I'd check the join under magnification and test it for strength before polishing."

2. Tell me about a time you made a mistake on a piece and how you handled it.

Why they ask

Mistakes happen on precious metal, and workshops want to know you'll own it and fix it properly rather than hide it.

How to structure your answer

STAR: situation, task, action, result.

Example answer

"I was resizing a platinum band and misjudged the amount of metal to remove, leaving it slightly loose. I noticed during final polish before the client collected it. I told my supervisor straight away, re-cut a properly sized section and resoldered it, checking the fit against the original sizing stick before finishing again. The client got the ring back on time and it fit correctly. I started double-checking sizing measurements against the stick before cutting from then on."

3. A client wants a ring resized in a day, but the setting is delicate and rushing the job risks cracking a stone. What do you do?

Why they ask

Tests judgement under pressure, balancing client expectations against what the metal and stone can actually handle.

How to structure your answer

Scenario response: assess the risk, decide, communicate the trade-off, propose a resolution.

Example answer

"I'd look at the setting first to confirm the risk is real, not just cautious guesswork. If it needs more care, I'd explain to the client exactly why: that resizing near a delicate setting without proper cooling time between steps can crack the stone. I'd offer a realistic timeframe, or a same-day option like an interim clip-on adjustment if that's workable, and let them choose. I'd rather lose a same-day job than replace a cracked stone."

4. What safety precautions do you take when using a soldering torch and handling polishing compounds?

Why they ask

Workshops deal with open flame, metal dust and chemical compounds daily, so this checks basic safe practice.

How to structure your answer

Direct explanation covering equipment, environment and PPE.

Example answer

"With the torch I make sure the bench is clear of anything flammable, I keep a fire extinguisher within reach, and I work with adequate ventilation since some fluxes give off fumes when heated. I wear safety glasses for both soldering and polishing, and a mask when buffing since metal dust builds up quickly on a buffing wheel. I also tie back loose clothing and jewellery of my own before working near the wheel, since it can catch on anything loose."

5. How do you approach turning a client's vague description into a finished design?

Why they ask

A lot of custom work starts with an unclear brief, so this checks how you manage that consultation and translate it into something workable on the bench.

How to structure your answer

Client-facing process explanation with a concrete example.

Example answer

"I start by asking specific questions rather than open-ended ones, like whether they want the stone raised or flush, and what metal tone they wear day to day. I'll sketch a couple of quick options on the spot so they've got something concrete to react to rather than describing further in the abstract. Once we've landed on a direction I'll do a more detailed sketch, and for anything complex I'll run it through CAD so they can see it from multiple angles before I start cutting metal."

6. What CAD software have you used for jewellery design, and how does it fit alongside your hand fabrication work?

Why they ask

Checks whether your design skills extend beyond hand sketching and how you integrate digital tools into a traditional bench workflow.

How to structure your answer

Tools and workflow explanation with a specific example of when you'd choose CAD over hand methods.

Example answer

"I've used CAD jewellery design software for pieces with complex or symmetrical settings, like a halo ring where getting the prong spacing even by hand sketch alone is harder to judge. I'll model it, print a wax or resin version for the client to see in hand, then adjust before casting. For simpler repairs or one-off custom pieces I'll usually skip CAD and go straight to sketching and fabricating, since it's faster and the client's often standing right there."