

Jewellery Designer interview questions

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What to expect

Interviews for jewellery designer roles usually blend a portfolio review with a technical discussion and a conversation about how you work with clients and production. Employers want to see design thinking, practical making knowledge and an understanding of the commercial side.

- **Portfolio and design process:** You walk through a selection of pieces and explain the brief, your sketches, CAD models and final outcome.
- **Technical and CAD:** Questions on software, modelling for casting, stone setting and finishing processes.
- **Client-facing and negotiation:** How you handle briefs, budgets, changes and expectations.
- **Scenario and problem-solving:** A design brief with constraints, or a production issue to resolve.
- **Safety and workshop awareness:** If the role involves bench work, questions on safe handling of tools, chemicals and dust.
- **Behavioural:** Past examples of teamwork, deadlines and dealing with setbacks.

Typically starts with a portfolio walkthrough, then a technical or CAD exercise, then a conversation with the studio lead about client work and production. Some employers ask for a short design brief or a bench test as part of the process.

1. Walk me through your design process for a custom engagement ring, from first conversation to finished piece.

Why they ask

This shows how you structure a project, communicate with a client and move between sketch, CAD and making.

How to structure your answer

A process walk-through: start with the brief, then concept sketches, CAD modelling, client approval, material selection, model preparation, casting, setting and finishing.

Example answer

"First I sit down with the client to understand the stone they have in mind, the style they like, the budget and how they want the ring to wear. I sketch a few directions, then move to Rhino 3D to model the chosen concept. I render it for approval and send a technical drawing to the jeweller. Once the client signs off, I prepare a wax model, check the wall thickness and casting clearance, and send it to the caster. After casting, I work with the setter to seat the stone and the polisher to finish the surface. I inspect the ring before handover."

2. Tell me about a time a client asked for changes late in a project. How did you handle it?

Why they ask

Tests how you manage scope changes, communication and production impact.

How to structure your answer

STAR: Situation, Task, Action, Result.

Example answer

"A client approved a pendant design, then asked to change the stone shape after the wax model was already cut. I explained the impact on the casting and setting, then offered two options: reshape the existing wax with a small adjustment, or start a new model for a cleaner result. We agreed on the new

model to avoid a weak setting. I kept the original budget by using a simpler bail and the client was happy with the final piece. I learned to show stone options earlier in the approval process."

3. You are given a design brief with a tight budget and a client who wants a large gemstone. How do you approach it?

Why they ask

Tests judgement, negotiation and practical design thinking.

How to structure your answer

Judgement under pressure: assess constraints, prioritise, propose options, confirm with client.

Example answer

"I would first ask what matters most: the size of the stone, the metal, or the overall look. If the budget is tight, I might suggest a slightly smaller stone with a halo or a different setting that gives the illusion of size without the cost. I would also look at using a less expensive metal for the band or a simpler finish. I would show a CAD render of two or three options so the client can see the trade-offs. Then we agree on a direction before any metal is cut."

4. How do you decide between hand sketching and CAD modelling for a given piece?

Why they ask

Shows design judgement and knowledge of both approaches.

How to structure your answer

Technical reasoning: compare strengths of each method, relate to the piece, explain the decision.

Example answer

"I sketch first when I am exploring ideas or when the form is organic and needs quick iteration. CAD is better when the piece needs precise symmetry, repeatable elements or a technical drawing for a setter. For a solitaire ring with a classic profile, I would model in Rhino 3D early so the client can see proportions and I can generate a clean drawing. For a one-off brooch with a sculptural leaf, I might carve wax by hand and use sketching to refine the shape. I often combine both."

5. Describe your experience with lost wax casting and preparing models for casting.

Why they ask

Checks practical knowledge of a core production process.

How to structure your answer

Technical experience: outline the process, your role, and how you avoid common problems.

Example answer

"I have prepared wax models for both one-off pieces and small production runs. I check wall thickness, sprue placement and clearance for the metal. I keep a record of shrinkage for different metals so the final piece matches the design. I also work with the caster to review any defects after casting and adjust the model if needed. For a run of rings, I made sure the waxes were consistent so the castings came out clean and needed minimal cleanup."

6. How do you ensure quality when working with stone setters and polishers?

Why they ask

Shows collaboration, quality control and attention to detail.

How to structure your answer

Process and quality: explain communication, checks and follow-up.

Example answer

"I provide a clear technical drawing and a finished sample or render so the setter knows the intended look. Before sending a piece, I check that the setting will hold the stone securely and that the metal around it is thick enough. After setting, I inspect the piece under magnification for gaps or scratches. If a polisher returns a piece with a soft edge, I discuss it and we adjust the finish. I keep a checklist for final inspection before the piece goes to the client."