

Laboratory Technician interview questions

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What to expect

Laboratory Technician interviews mix technical process checks with compliance and safety questions, since accuracy and traceability matter as much as raw skill. Panels often include a senior technician or laboratory manager who will probe how you handle errors, deadlines and equipment problems, not just whether you know the procedures.

- **Technical/process:** Walking through specific laboratory procedures, from sample preparation to analyser operation and result verification.
- **Quality assurance and compliance:** How you maintain accuracy, documentation and accreditation standards such as NATA requirements.
- **Safety:** Handling of biohazards, chemical safety and incident response.
- **Behavioural:** Past examples of managing workload, errors or difficult results under pressure.
- **Scenario/judgement:** Hypothetical situations testing decision-making when results or equipment don't behave as expected.

Interviews typically open with background and motivation questions, move into technical process and scenario questions that make up the bulk of the discussion, then close with safety and compliance checks and a chance for you to ask about the laboratory's workflow or accreditation status.

1. Walk me through how you would prepare and process a batch of biological samples for analysis.

Why they ask

This checks whether you actually understand standardised sample preparation, not just that you've heard of it.

How to structure your answer

Describe the process step by step in order: receiving and labelling, preparation method, equipment used, and how you confirm the batch is ready for analysis.

Example answer

"I start by checking the sample labels against the request forms and logging them into the LIS. Then I prepare each sample according to the test-specific protocol, whether that's centrifuging, aliquoting or diluting. Before loading the analyser I double-check reagent levels and calibration status, then run the batch and hold results for verification against quality control ranges before they're released."

2. Tell me about a time you noticed an equipment or result problem before it caused an issue.

Why they ask

Interviewers want evidence you catch errors early rather than relying on someone else to find them.

How to structure your answer

Use STAR: describe the situation, the specific task or responsibility, the action you took, and the result or outcome.

Example answer

"During a routine run I noticed one analyser's control values were drifting slightly outside range. My task was to decide whether to keep processing or pause the batch. I paused the run, recalibrated the instrument and reran the controls before continuing. That caught what would have been an inaccurate result set before any patient samples were affected."

3. How do you handle a situation where a test result looks clinically or scientifically unlikely but the process seemed correct?

Why they ask

Tests judgement under uncertainty, a common real situation in pathology and testing labs.

How to structure your answer

Explain the reasoning process: what you check first, who you escalate to, and how you document the decision.

Example answer

"I'd first recheck the sample identity and re-verify the analyser's quality control status. If everything checks out, I'd rerun the sample rather than release an unexpected result outright. If the repeat still looks off, I'd escalate to the supervising scientist or pathologist and document the steps taken, since an unusual result still needs a clear explanation before it goes to a report."

4. What steps do you take to keep a laboratory audit-ready for accreditation reviews such as NATA?

Why they ask

Compliance and documentation are core to this role and often assessed directly.

How to structure your answer

List the ongoing habits and periodic checks you maintain, rather than a one-off answer.

Example answer

"I keep calibration and maintenance logs current as I go rather than catching up later, file quality control results against expected ranges each shift, and make sure consumables and reagent batches are tracked with expiry dates. When an audit comes up, most of the groundwork is already in the records rather than something to assemble last minute."

5. Describe how you handle a chemical spill or biohazard exposure in the lab.

Why they ask

Direct safety knowledge check, given the handling of biological and chemical materials.

How to structure your answer

Give the immediate response steps in order, then the follow-up reporting requirements.

Example answer

"First priority is containing the spill and making sure anyone nearby is safe, following the specific SDS or spill kit procedure for that substance. I'd isolate the area, decontaminate using the correct method, and then complete an incident report as required under the lab's WHS procedures. Any affected samples or equipment get quarantined until they're checked."

6. How do you manage your workload when several urgent samples arrive at once?

Why they ask

Tests prioritisation and composure under time pressure, common in clinical testing environments.

How to structure your answer

Use STAR, focusing on how you triaged tasks and communicated with the team.

Example answer

"During a busy shift, three urgent samples came in within minutes of each other. I checked the turnaround requirements on each, flagged the most time-critical one to run first, and let the rest of the team know so nobody duplicated work. All three were processed within their required windows because I prioritised by clinical urgency rather than order of arrival."