

Lighting Technician interview questions

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What to expect

Lighting technician interviews in Australia usually mix a conversation about your experience with a practical or technical discussion. Employers want to know that you can rig and focus safely, run a console under pressure, and communicate with designers and stage managers when the plan meets the venue.

- **Process:** Questions about how you approach a bump-in, a focus session or a cue-by-cue tech, used to check your method and habits.
- **Technical:** Console programming, networking, electrical safety and fixture maintenance questions, often tied to the specific desks and software the employer uses.
- **Behavioural:** Tell me about a time questions that look at how you have handled mistakes, tight deadlines and difficult notes.
- **Scenario:** Live problem questions such as a fixture failing mid-show or a power limit changing the design, used to see how you judge what matters first.
- **Collaboration and client-facing:** Questions about working with designers, directors, stage managers and venue staff, including when you have to say no to a request.
- **Safety and compliance:** Questions on risk assessments, test and tag, working at heights and licensing, because the role carries real electrical and rigging risk.

A typical process starts with a phone or video conversation with a production manager or head of department, covering your background and availability. If that goes well, you might be invited to a venue for a practical session: a short rig and focus task, a console programming exercise, or a walk-through of a lighting plan. Some employers add a second conversation with the designer or technical director. The final stage is usually a reference check and confirmation of tickets and licences.

1. Walk me through how you approach a bump-in from receiving the lighting plan to the first cue.

Why they ask

This shows whether you have a repeatable method and where you build in checks, not just whether you can talk about gear.

How to structure your answer

Process walk-through: start with the plan and venue, move through prep, rig, focus, patch, programming and tech, and finish with what you document for the next venue.

Example answer

"I start by reading the plan against the venue: rigging points, weight load, power, trim heights and any restrictions the venue has flagged. I mark out the floor and check the fixture list against what has been delivered. During the bump-in I work with the crew to rig and cable safely, then focus with the designer, keeping notes on any changes. Once the rig is up I patch and check every fixture, then build the cue stack in the console. In the tech I run the cues with the stage manager and designer, adjust as needed, and save a clean show file. After the last performance I update the plan and patch notes so the next venue has an accurate record."

2. Tell me about a time a show did not go to plan and you had to fix it in the moment.

Why they ask

Behavioural questions about live problems reveal your temperament and whether you stay useful when things break.

How to structure your answer

STAR: set the scene briefly, describe the task you owned, explain the action you took, and give the result in plain terms.

Example answer

"I was operating a mid-sized theatre show when a moving light on the front truss stopped responding during the first act. I could see from the console that the fixture had dropped off the network, so I checked the data chain in my head and realised the issue was likely a loose connector at the truss. I could not stop the show, so I re-routed the cue stack to use the remaining front lights and brought up a wash from the same position to cover the gap. At interval I went up and reseated the connector, ran a quick check, and the fixture came back for Act Two. The designer was happy that the look stayed consistent, and I added a pre-show data check to my routine afterwards."

3. A fixture fails halfway through Act One in a moving light rig. What do you do?

Why they ask

Scenario questions test your judgement under pressure and whether you know the difference between a fix that can wait and one that cannot.

How to structure your answer

Judgement under pressure: safety first, then the show, then the fix. Talk through what you check, what you tell the stage manager, and how you decide whether to intervene.

Example answer

"First I check whether the failure is a safety issue. If there is any sign of heat, smoke, a damaged cable or a fixture hanging badly, I tell the stage manager immediately and we deal with it under the venue's procedures. If it is a clean fault, such as a lamp or a data drop, I look at the cue stack and decide whether I can cover the position with another fixture or whether I need to re-plot a few cues. I let the stage manager know what I am doing so they are not surprised. I do not go up a truss during a live show unless it is an emergency. I log the fault and fix it at the interval or after the show."

4. How do you work with a lighting designer whose vision is difficult to achieve within the venue's power and rigging limits?

Why they ask

This role is collaborative, and employers want to see that you can protect the design without promising something unsafe or impossible.

How to structure your answer

Collaboration and problem-solving: restate the designer's intent, explain the constraint clearly, then offer two or three practical alternatives.

Example answer

"I start by asking what the look is doing for the scene, so I understand what matters most. Then I explain the constraint in plain terms: we have a certain number of circuits, a weight limit on the points, or a power supply that will not carry the full rig. I offer options rather than a flat no, such as swapping a few fixtures for lower-draw LED units, re-positioning a special to cover two areas, or building the effect in the cue stack instead of adding more hardware. If the designer still wants to push further, I take it to the production manager so the decision is made with the full picture. I have found that designers usually respond well when you show them you are trying to protect their idea, not just the paperwork."

5. What is your process for testing and tagging and risk assessing a hire package before it goes out?

Why they ask

This is a compliance-heavy part of the job, and the interviewer is checking that you treat it as normal work rather than a nuisance.

How to structure your answer

Technical and safety walk-through: list the steps in order, name the standard or ticket you work to, and say what you record.

Example answer

"I work through the package fixture by fixture. I inspect each unit for damage, check leads and connectors, and test and tag to AS/NZS 3760, recording the results in the log. For rigging hardware I check the SWL tags and make sure nothing is out of date. I confirm the package matches the plan and the power draw is within the venue's supply. Then I write or update the risk assessment, covering working at heights, electrical safety, manual handling and anything specific to the venue. If something fails, it does not leave the workshop until it is repaired or replaced."

6. Describe your experience with GrandMA3 or Eos and how you handle a console you have not used before.

Why they ask

Console fluency matters, but adaptability matters just as much because venues and tours use different desks.

How to structure your answer

Technical and adaptability: name the desks you know, describe how you prepare for a new one, and give a short example of making it work.

Example answer

"I have run shows on GrandMA3 and ETC Eos, and I am comfortable building a patch, creating groups and palettes, and recording a cue stack on both. If I am booked on a desk I have not used, I download the offline editor and spend time before the bump-in building a basic show file: a patch that matches the rig, some colour and position palettes, and a few cue stacks I can rely on. I also read the manual sections on networking and backup. On site I arrive early, run a test show, and keep a simple paper backup of the patch so I am not stuck if something goes wrong. I have picked up new desks this way a few times and it has kept the tech days calm."