

Gallery or Museum Technician interview questions

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What to expect

Interviews for gallery or museum technician roles test both practical skill and judgement. You will be asked about object handling, mount making and collection documentation, and you will need to show that you understand safety and conservation priorities.

- **Technical:** Questions on mount making, object handling, condition checking and collection management systems.
- **Process:** Walk-through questions about how you pack, transport, install or document objects.
- **Behavioural:** Past examples of working under pressure, solving problems or collaborating with a team.
- **Scenario:** Hypothetical situations involving fragile objects, tight deadlines or conflicting stakeholder requests.
- **Safety:** Questions on manual handling, WHS requirements and risk assessment in gallery and store environments.
- **Client-facing:** How you work with curators, conservators, registrars and lenders.

Interviews often start with a short phone or video screen, then move to a panel interview at the institution. The panel usually includes a collections manager, a conservator or registrar, and sometimes a curator. You may be asked to walk through a practical task, such as describing how you would mount an object or handle a fragile item, and you may be shown a display space or collection store. Questions mix technical knowledge with behavioural and safety scenarios.

1. Can you walk me through how you would condition-check and document an object before it goes on display?

Why they ask

This tests your technical knowledge of condition reporting and collection documentation, which is central to the role.

How to structure your answer

A step-by-step technical explanation: describe the sequence you follow, the tools and systems you use, and how you record and escalate any issues.

Example answer

"I start by reviewing the object's existing record and any previous condition reports, then I place it on a padded surface in good light. I examine it methodically from top to bottom, noting any cracks, losses, previous repairs or unstable areas. I photograph the object overall and any areas of concern, then update the record in Vernon CMS with the date, my initials and a clear description of its condition. If I find something that needs treatment or affects whether it can go on display, I flag it to the conservator and registrar before anything moves further. Once the object is installed, I repeat a lighter check and note any changes."

2. Tell me about a time you had to handle a fragile or valuable object under time pressure.

Why they ask

This looks at how you balance care with deadlines, a common tension in exhibition installation.

How to structure your answer

STAR: situation, task, action, result. Focus on the specific handling decision you made and the outcome.

Example answer

"We were installing a touring exhibition and a ceramic piece arrived later than expected, with only a short window before the opening. The task was to get it mounted safely without rushing the handling. I paused the installation, checked the object's condition report, and worked with the conservator to choose a mount that supported the base and reduced vibration. I moved it with a colleague using a trolley and padded supports, and we installed it with time to spare. The object went on display without damage, and the curator was able to open on schedule."

3. You're installing an exhibition and you notice a mount is not holding an object securely. What do you do?

Why they ask

This is a scenario question about judgement, safety and escalation.

How to structure your answer

Judgement under pressure: stop, assess, secure, escalate, document, and only continue when it is safe to do so.

Example answer

"I would stop the installation immediately and make sure the object is not left in an unstable position. If it is safe to do so, I would support the object and call the conservator or collections manager to assess it. I would not try to fix the mount by adding tape or padding without approval. Once the object is secure, I would document what happened in the condition report and note the mount issue for the exhibition team. I would then work with the mount maker or conservator to replace or adjust the support before continuing. The priority is the object, then the schedule."

4. Describe how you approach packing and transporting collection items for loan or internal movement.

Why they ask

This tests your understanding of safe handling, materials and documentation for objects in transit.

How to structure your answer

A process walk-through: planning, materials, packing method, documentation, and transport.

Example answer

"I start by checking the loan agreement or movement request and the object's condition report. I choose materials based on the object's needs, such as acid-free tissue, foam padding, and a custom crate if the object is fragile. I pack the object so it cannot move inside the crate, with supports around weak points. I label the crate clearly and include a condition report and handling instructions. For transport, I make sure the crate is secured and that the vehicle has appropriate climate control if needed. On arrival, I condition-check the object again before it goes into the store or gallery."

5. What does safe manual handling look like in a museum or gallery setting, and how do you apply WHS requirements?

Why they ask

This checks your awareness of workplace health and safety, which is essential when moving objects and working in stores and galleries.

How to structure your answer

Protocol and risk assessment: describe the principles, then give an example of how you apply them.

Example answer

"Safe manual handling means assessing the load, the pathway and the environment before lifting anything. I check the weight and size of an object, use trolleys or team lifts where needed, and keep pathways clear. I follow the institution's WHS procedures, including hazard reporting and incident reporting. For example, when moving a heavy display case, I would organise two people, use a trolley, and check that doorways and lifts can take the load. If an object is too heavy or awkward, I do not lift it alone. I also make sure I have the right gloves and that I can see where I am going."

6. How do you work with curators, conservators and registrars when their requirements conflict?

Why they ask

This tests stakeholder management and communication, which is central to the role.

How to structure your answer

Stakeholder management: listen, clarify priorities, propose options, and document agreed outcomes.

Example answer

"I start by listening to each person's concern so I understand what they need. A curator might want an object displayed in a certain way, while a conservator has concerns about light levels or support. I would bring them together, explain the practical options from my side, and suggest a solution that meets conservation requirements and the exhibition concept. For example, I might propose a different mount or a shorter display period. Once we agree, I document the decision and make sure everyone has the same information. If there is still disagreement, I escalate to the collections manager for a final call."