

Plumber interview questions

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What to expect

Plumber interviews mix trade knowledge with practical judgement, since employers need to know you can diagnose problems correctly and work safely without constant supervision. Expect a blend of technical questions about diagnostics and standards, behavioural questions about how you've handled real jobs, and at least one scenario question testing what you'd do when a job goes off-script.

- **Process:** Questions asking you to walk through how you'd approach a diagnostic or installation task step by step.
- **Behavioural:** Questions about past jobs, drawing out how you handled pressure, mistakes or difficult clients.
- **Scenario:** Hypothetical situations testing judgement when a job turns out more complex or riskier than expected.
- **Technical:** Questions checking your grasp of blueprint reading, pipe sizing and Australian plumbing standards.
- **Safety:** Questions on WHS practice, particularly around gas work, confined spaces and site hazards.
- **Client-facing:** Questions about managing customer expectations, cost conversations and difficult interactions.

Most plumbing interviews start with an informal chat about your licence, ticket endorsements and availability for on-call or after-hours work, then move into technical and scenario questions. Some employers, particularly larger contractors, will ask for evidence of past work such as photos, compliance certificates or a reference from a previous employer, and may follow up with a short practical or trade test on site.

1. Walk me through how you'd diagnose a blocked drain when there's no visible cause.

Why they ask

This checks whether you follow a logical diagnostic process rather than guessing, and whether you know how to use inspection equipment properly.

How to structure your answer

Give a clear step-by-step walkthrough in the order you'd actually do the job, from initial questions to the client through to final sign-off.

Example answer

"I'd start by asking the client when the blockage started and whether it's linked to a particular fixture, since that narrows down the likely section of pipe. Then I'd run a CCTV drain inspection camera through the line to find the exact location and cause, whether that's tree root intrusion, a collapsed section or a grease build-up. Once I know what I'm dealing with, I'd decide between a high-pressure water jet clear or a physical dig and repair, then finish with a pressure test to confirm the line is clear and the repair holds before I close it up."

2. Tell me about a time you had to fix a plumbing issue under real time pressure.

Why they ask

Employers want evidence you can keep quality and compliance up even when a job is urgent or the client is anxious.

How to structure your answer

Use STAR: describe the situation, the specific task in front of you, the action you took, and the result.

Example answer

"I was called to a burst hot water system on a Sunday where the client had water pooling near the electrical meter box. The task was to isolate the water safely, stop further damage and get the system assessed before it caused an electrical hazard. I shut off the isolation valve, drained the remaining pressure from the tank, and taped off the area near the meter box until I could confirm it was dry and safe. I came back the next day with the right replacement unit and had hot water restored, and the client didn't have any electrical issues from the leak."

3. You arrive at an emergency callout and the situation is more serious than what was described. What do you do?

Why they ask

This tests judgement under pressure and whether you prioritise safety and correct process over rushing to please the client.

How to structure your answer

Talk through how you'd assess risk first, then decide on immediate action versus escalation, and how you'd communicate with the client throughout.

Example answer

"If I turned up expecting a simple leaking tap and found active gas smell or a major water main failure instead, I'd stop and reassess before touching anything. For a gas smell, I'd get everyone clear of the property and call the gas emergency line rather than attempt a fix myself if it's outside what's safe to handle alone. For a major water failure, I'd isolate the main supply first to stop damage, then explain to the client what I've found, what needs to happen next, and whether I need extra parts, another trade, or to book a follow-up visit to do the job properly."

4. How do you work out pipe sizing and layout from a set of blueprints for a new build?

Why they ask

This checks genuine technical competence with plans, calculations and compliance rather than just tool skills.

How to structure your answer

Explain your calculation and cross-checking process in order, referencing the standards you work to.

Example answer

"I start by reading the blueprint to understand the number of fixtures and their flow demand, then calculate the required pipe diameter based on that load using AS/NZS 3500 as the reference standard. I check the layout against the structural plans to avoid clashes with electrical or structural elements, and mark up anything that looks like it'll cause an access or fall issue for drainage. Once I'm happy with the layout, I use CAD blueprinting software to confirm measurements before ordering materials, so I'm not guessing pipe runs on site."

5. What safety steps do you take on a job involving gas fitting or confined spaces?

Why they ask

Plumbing carries real safety risk, so employers need to know you follow proper WHS procedure without being told each time.

How to structure your answer

List your safety steps in the order you'd apply them on a real job, then note how you'd handle a hazard if one came up.

Example answer

"Before starting any gas work, I check the isolation is in place, ventilate the area, and use a gas detector to confirm there's no leak before I begin cutting or connecting anything. For confined spaces like under-floor drainage work, I check for gas buildup, make sure someone knows where I am and for how long, and use proper lighting and ventilation. If I find anything unexpected, like corroded fittings or a smell I can't account for, I stop and address that before continuing rather than working around it."

6. How do you handle a client who's unhappy about the cost or timeline of a job?

Why they ask

Plumbers deal directly with clients, often when something has already gone wrong, so this checks how you manage that relationship.

How to structure your answer

Frame this as a short behavioural example showing how you communicate and resolve the concern, not just how you feel about it.

Example answer

"I had a client who was unhappy that a hot water system replacement cost more than expected once I found corroded pipework behind the unit that also needed replacing. I stopped, showed them the corrosion directly, and explained why leaving it would likely cause a bigger failure later. I gave them a revised quote before doing any extra work rather than surprising them on the invoice, and they agreed to go ahead once they understood the reasoning."