Pool Builder interview questions

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What to expect

Pool builder interviews combine technical and compliance questions with commercial and client-facing ones. Employers want to know you can sequence a build, keep it legal and safe, manage subcontracted trades, and hold a homeowner's confidence through a project that can run for months.

- **Process and sequencing:** How you take a pool from contract to handover, including setout, excavation, inspection hold points and commissioning.
- **Technical and compliance:** Barrier requirements under AS 1926.1, plumbing to AS/NZS 3500, structural details, and how you document compliance for the certifier.
- **Scenario and judgement:** What you do when rock, groundwater, weather or a client change disrupts the program mid build.
- **Client-facing:** How you explain delays, variations and technical decisions to homeowners who are often building for the first time.
- **Commercial and estimating:** How you quote from plans, handle unknowns like soil conditions, and control cost on site.
- **Licences and tickets:** Verification of your builder or contractor licence, White Card, and plant tickets.

Expect a phone or video screen first with a recruiter or office manager, then an interview with the construction manager or business owner, often on site or in the office with a set of plans on the table. You may be asked to walk through a recent project from plans, and larger firms sometimes run a second conversation covering quoting and client management. Licence and ticket checks usually happen before any offer.

1. Walk me through how you take a pool build from signed contract to handover.

Why they ask

The interviewer wants to see that you understand the full sequence and the inspection hold points, not just one trade.

How to structure your answer

A staged walk-through in chronological order, naming the hold points, who you coordinate at each stage, and where compliance checks sit.

> **Example answer**
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> *“I start with the approved plans and the survey, checking setout, levels and the location of services before anything gets dug. Excavation comes next, and I book the excavator and the spoil removal together so trucks are not sitting idle. Once the hole is at level I bring in the steel fixer and the plumber, because the reinforcement and the filtration pipework need to be inspected together before the shell goes in. After the pre-pour inspection I schedule the shotcrete, then curing, then the interior finish and waterline tiling. The barrier goes in before I fill it, since it has to be compliant at handover, and I commission the pump and filter and walk the client through the controls at the end. I set that program at contract stage and check progress against it every week.”*

2. Tell me about a time a build went off plan, such as hitting rock or unexpected groundwater. What did you do?

Why they ask

Disruption is routine in pool construction, and the interviewer is testing your judgement and your honesty with the client.

How to structure your answer
STAR: the situation, what you found, the options you worked through with the engineer and client, and how it ended.

Example answer
"On a job in the Hills district we hit a band of rock well above the level the soil report suggested, so the shell could not go where the plan showed it. I stopped excavation, photographed the face, and got the engineer and certifier on the phone the same day rather than guessing. There were two options, extra excavation and piering, or shifting the pool slightly within the setback and adjusting the coping line. I put both to the client with the cost and time difference spelled out, and they chose the shift. I lodged a written variation before any further work happened, re-set the levels with the laser, and we still had the shell in before the end of the week. The lesson I took from it is to raise the variation early and keep the client in the decision."

3. How do you make sure a pool barrier will meet AS 1926.1 before handover?

Why they ask
Non-compliant barriers are the fastest way for a builder to fail a final inspection and delay handover.

How to structure your answer
State the standard, then the physical checks you run, then the documentation and state requirements you follow through on.

Example answer
"I work to AS 1926.1 and the requirements of the relevant state register, so the checks are the same every time. I measure the barrier height from the finished ground and check the non-climbable zone for anything a child could use to get a foothold, including air conditioners, taps and garden edges. Gates get tested for self-closing and self-latching from every position, and I check the latch height and that there are no gaps that would let a small child through. On a glass fence I confirm the panels and fixings meet the standard and are not loose. Before handover I make sure the compliance certificate is in place, the CPR sign is mounted, and the owner has been shown how the gate hardware works so they maintain it after I leave."

4. A client wants to move the pool after excavation has already started. How do you handle it?

Why they ask
It tests whether you can protect the client relationship without giving away margin or compromising the structure.

How to structure your answer
Acknowledge the request, assess the implications, present options with consequences, then lock in a written variation before work resumes.

Example answer
"First I stop and hear them out, because usually there is a real reason, maybe a sight line from the house or a tree they want to keep. Then I assess what it actually costs to move: extra excavation and spoil, additional steel, a redesign of the plumbing runs and possibly a fresh approval if the setback changes. I give them the options in plain terms, including the version that keeps the current position and adjusts the coping or surrounding paving instead. If they still want the move, I put it in a written variation with the revised cost and the impact on the program, and I do not restart excavation until they have signed it. That keeps the relationship good and keeps the numbers honest."

5. How do you coordinate subcontracted trades on a site with a tight program?

Why they ask

Pool building is largely a coordination job, and the interviewer is checking you can run several trades without stacking them on top of each other.

How to structure your answer

A process answer covering sequencing, booking and communication cadence, plus what you do when a trade falls behind.

Example answer

"I build the program around the trades rather than the other way round, so excavation, steel, plumbing, shotcrete, tiling and fencing each have a booked window with a buffer either side. I confirm bookings a week out and again the day before, and I keep a single site contact so nobody is getting instructions from two people. Each morning I check what is actually finished against the plan, because a trade turning up to incomplete prep costs a day. If someone falls behind I look for whether another part of the build can move forward in the meantime, and I tell the client early rather than at the deadline. Most program slips come from poor handover between trades, so I treat those handover points as the thing I manage hardest."

6. How do you quote a job when block levels and soil conditions are uncertain?

Why they ask

It tests commercial judgement and whether you will protect both the business and the client from a surprise mid build.

How to structure your answer

A commercial answer: how you gather information, what you exclude or allow for, how you present it, and how you manage it once you are on site.

Example answer

"I get out and look at the block rather than quoting from the plan alone, and if the fall or the soil looks tricky I recommend a geotech report before pricing. Anything I cannot verify goes in as a clearly labelled allowance, so the client can see what is firm and what is provisional. I list exclusions in writing, things like rock excavation, dewatering and service relocation, and I explain what triggers each one. On site, if the allowance is not going to hold, I raise it with the client as soon as I know rather than at the end of the build. That way there are no arguments at final account, and the client understands from day one which parts of the price depend on what we find."