

Radiator Repairer interview questions

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What to expect

Interviews for radiator repairer roles usually blend a practical assessment with a conversation about your experience, safety habits and customer manner. Employers want to know you can diagnose cooling faults methodically and work safely with heat, pressure and chemicals.

- **Technical and diagnostic:** Questions about how you test radiators, identify leaks, and trace overheating faults through the cooling system.
- **Behavioural:** Past examples of repairing blocked or damaged radiators, working under time pressure, or handling a difficult repair.
- **Scenario and problem-solving:** Hypothetical faults where you must reason through symptoms and decide what to check next.
- **Safety:** How you manage risks from soldering, brazing, pressure testing, chemicals and workshop hazards.
- **Client-facing:** How you explain faults, repair options and costs to customers without jargon.
- **Process and commercial:** How you quote, estimate and organise a repair job from inspection to handover.

The process often starts with a phone screen, then a workshop interview where you may be asked to diagnose a faulty radiator or cooling system. Expect questions on pressure testing, soldering and brazing, and how you explain repairs to customers. Some employers set a short practical task, such as identifying a leak or checking a thermostat.

1. Walk me through how you diagnose a vehicle that is overheating but has no obvious coolant leak.

Why they ask

Tests your methodical thinking and cooling system knowledge, which is the core of the role.

How to structure your answer

A step-by-step walk-through: start with the basics, move to pressure testing, then check components like the thermostat, water pump and radiator cap.

Example answer

"I start by checking the coolant level and condition. If the level is low but there is no visible leak, I look for internal leaks, like a failing head gasket, by checking for bubbles in the coolant or milky oil. Next I pressure test the system to see if it holds pressure. If it does, I check the radiator cap, thermostat and water pump. I also feel the radiator hoses for firmness and check the radiator core for cold spots that suggest a blockage. If everything checks out, I might use a multimeter to test the cooling fan circuit. I document each step and explain my findings to the customer before quoting any repair."

2. Tell me about a time you had to repair a radiator that was badly blocked or corroded.

Why they ask

Looks for hands-on experience with the messy, real-world repairs that come through a radiator workshop.

How to structure your answer

STAR: describe the situation, your task, the action you took, and the result for the vehicle and customer.

Example answer

"At my last workshop, a customer brought in an older ute that kept overheating. The radiator was full of rust and scale. My task was to restore cooling without replacing the whole unit if possible. I removed the radiator and used an ultrasonic cleaning tank and rodding tools to clear the core. I replaced the tanks and soldered a small crack. After pressure testing, the radiator held pressure and the ute ran at normal temperature. The customer was happy to avoid a full replacement and came back for regular flushes."

3. You are pressure testing a radiator and it holds pressure but the customer still reports overheating. What do you check next?

Why they ask

Assesses your judgement when the obvious answer is not the whole story, and your ability to think beyond the radiator.

How to structure your answer

Judgement under pressure: acknowledge the test result, then systematically eliminate other causes such as thermostat, water pump, fan, head gasket or blockage elsewhere.

Example answer

"If the radiator holds pressure, I know the leak is not there. I would check the thermostat first, as a stuck thermostat is a common cause. I would also test the water pump for proper circulation and check the cooling fan operation with a multimeter. I would look for a blocked heater core or a failing head gasket by checking for exhaust gases in the coolant. I would explain to the customer that we need to test the whole system, not just the radiator, to find the real fault."

4. How do you manage safety when soldering or brazing near fuel lines or plastic components?

Why they ask

Safety is critical in this trade, and employers need to know you will not cause a fire or injury.

How to structure your answer

Risk assessment and controls: identify hazards, isolate, use PPE, fire watch, and follow WHS procedures.

Example answer

"Before I start, I check for any fuel lines or plastic parts nearby. If I can, I remove or shield them with heat-resistant material. I make sure a fire extinguisher is within reach and I use appropriate PPE, including gloves and eye protection. I work in a well-ventilated area and keep a fire watch during and after the job. I also follow my workplace's WHS procedures and isolate the area if needed."

5. Describe how you would explain a necessary radiator replacement to a customer who is worried about cost.

Why they ask

Tests your customer service and ability to communicate technical information without pressure.

How to structure your answer

Empathy first, then clear explanation of the fault, options, and why replacement is the safe choice. Avoid jargon.

Example answer

"I would start by acknowledging their concern. I would show them the damaged radiator and explain in plain terms why it cannot be safely repaired, for example if the core is too corroded or the tanks are cracked. I would give them the option of a repaired unit if it is safe, or a new or reconditioned replacement. I would explain that a failed radiator can lead to engine damage, which costs more to fix. I would provide a written quote with parts and labour so they can see exactly what they are paying for."

6. How do you quote and estimate a radiator repair job so the customer knows what to expect?

Why they ask

Shows you can run a job commercially, not just turn a spanner, which matters in small workshops.

How to structure your answer

Step-by-step: inspect, identify parts and labour, check availability, provide written quote, discuss options.

Example answer

"First I inspect the radiator and cooling system to understand the fault. I check whether the radiator can be repaired or needs replacement. I look up parts availability and cost from my suppliers. I estimate the labour time based on similar jobs. Then I prepare a written quote that lists parts, labour and any additional costs like coolant. I explain the quote to the customer and answer their questions. If they approve, I schedule the work. If not, I note what was discussed."