

Railway Signaller interview questions

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What to expect

Railway Signaller interviews are safety-critical and focus on your ability to follow procedures, communicate clearly and stay calm under pressure. You will likely face a mix of process, behavioural and scenario questions, with some technical elements about signalling systems.

- **Process and procedure:** Questions about how you set routes, manage track access and follow safe working rules.
- **Behavioural:** Questions that ask for examples of how you have handled pressure, teamwork or communication in the past.
- **Scenario and judgement:** Questions that put you in a live situation, such as a signal failure or trespasser, to see how you prioritise safety.
- **Technical:** Questions about your familiarity with TCMS, SCADA, control panels and radio dispatch.
- **Safety and compliance:** Questions about your understanding of the Rail Safety National Law and your operator's safe working rules.

The interview often starts with an introduction and questions about your background. Then you will move to scenario-based questions where you must walk through your decision-making. There may be a technical assessment on signalling rules or a simulated control panel exercise. Finally, you will have a chance to ask questions about the role and the roster.

1. Walk me through how you set a route for a train movement from one signal to the next.

Why they ask

Tests your technical knowledge of signalling and your ability to follow a safe, logical process.

How to structure your answer

Step-by-step walkthrough: start with the request, check the route, set points and signals, communicate, monitor.

Example answer

"First, I check the train register and the train graph to confirm the movement. Then I verify the route is clear of any possessions or works. I set the points and signals in the correct sequence using the control panel or TCMS. I confirm the route is set and communicate with the driver by radio to authorise the movement. I monitor the train's progress until it clears the section."

2. Tell me about a time you had to deal with a disruptive incident, like a signal failure or a train breakdown.

Why they ask

Assesses your behavioural response to pressure and your ability to follow incident procedures.

How to structure your answer

STAR: Situation, Task, Action, Result.

Example answer

"Situation: A signal failure occurred during peak hour. Task: I needed to keep trains moving safely. Action: I immediately implemented safe working procedures, contacting drivers and maintenance. I used the radio to coordinate a reduced speed movement past the failed signal. Result: We kept delays to a minimum and no safety incidents occurred. I also filed a detailed incident report."

3. You receive a report of a trespasser on the track. What do you do?

Why they ask

Tests your judgement and safety prioritisation in a high-risk scenario.

How to structure your answer

Judgement under pressure: assess, act, communicate, resolve.

Example answer

"First, I stop all train movements in the affected area by setting signals to danger. Then I alert the network controller and emergency services. I communicate with drivers to ensure they are aware and hold their trains. Once the area is secure, I coordinate with police or security to remove the trespasser. I only resume normal operations after confirming the track is clear and safe."

4. How do you ensure you stay compliant with rail safety regulations in your daily work?

Why they ask

Checks your understanding of the regulatory framework and your commitment to safety.

How to structure your answer

Describe your approach: knowledge, habits, reporting.

Example answer

"I keep up to date with the Rail Safety National Law and my operator's safe working rules. I follow procedures for every task, no shortcuts. I participate in regular training and safety briefings. I report any incidents or near misses immediately, and I use checklists and the electronic train register to record everything accurately."

5. Describe a time you had to communicate complex information to a colleague under pressure.

Why they ask

Assesses your communication skills, which are critical for radio and phone coordination.

How to structure your answer

STAR: Situation, Task, Action, Result.

Example answer

"During a possession, I had to coordinate with a maintenance crew who wanted to access the track earlier than planned. I explained the conflicting train movements and negotiated a safe window. I used clear, concise radio communication and confirmed understanding. We adjusted the schedule without delaying trains, and the work was completed safely."

6. What would you do if you noticed a colleague was about to make a safety-critical error, like setting a wrong route?

Why they ask

Tests your safety culture and willingness to intervene.

How to structure your answer

Immediate action, then report and support.

Example answer

"I would immediately stop the action if possible, or call out a warning. Safety is the priority. I would then speak to the colleague privately to understand what happened and remind them of the correct procedure. I would report the near miss as per company policy and suggest a refresher if needed."