

Sailing Instructor interview questions

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What to expect

The interview for a Sailing Instructor role typically assesses your sailing knowledge, teaching ability, and safety awareness. It often includes a practical on-water component and a formal interview with club or school representatives.

- **Technical and teaching:** Questions that probe your sailing techniques, instructional methods, and ability to explain concepts clearly.
- **Safety and emergency response:** Scenario-based questions about how you handle incidents on the water, such as capsize, equipment failure, or changing weather.
- **Behavioural:** Questions about past experiences with students, teamwork, or challenging situations, using the STAR method.
- **Client-facing:** Questions about how you interact with students, parents, or club members, focusing on communication and customer service.

The process usually starts with a phone or in-person interview covering your experience and qualifications. This is often followed by a practical on-water assessment where you demonstrate teaching a short lesson and boat handling. Some employers may also ask for a written test on sailing theory and safety regulations.

1. Walk me through how you plan a sailing lesson for a group of beginners.

Why they ask

This assesses your ability to structure a safe and effective lesson, considering weather, student ability, and syllabus requirements.

How to structure your answer

Use a step-by-step walk-through, covering preparation, briefing, on-water activities, and debrief.

Example answer

"First, I check the weather forecast using BOM Weather and PredictWind to ensure conditions are suitable for beginners. I then prepare the boats, checking rigging and safety equipment. Before launching, I brief the students on safety procedures, including capsize drills and the day's objectives. On the water, I demonstrate basic techniques like tacking, then supervise as students practice in a controlled area. I finish with a debrief to reinforce learning and gather feedback."

2. Explain how you would teach tacking to a student who is struggling to coordinate the helm and sheets.

Why they ask

This tests your instructional skills and ability to adapt to individual learning needs.

How to structure your answer

Break down the technique into simple steps and describe how you would demonstrate and provide feedback.

Example answer

"I would start by breaking tacking into three steps: steering, sheet handling, and body movement. I would demonstrate the sequence slowly, then have the student practice each step separately. For coordination, I might use a slower drill, like tacking in light winds, and provide verbal cues. I would also use positive reinforcement and adjust my teaching style until the student is comfortable."

3. During a lesson, the wind suddenly picks up and a student capsizes. What do you do?

Why they ask

This is a safety scenario to see if you can stay calm and follow emergency procedures.

How to structure your answer

Use a judgment-under-pressure approach, outlining immediate actions, communication, and recovery.

Example answer

"My first priority is ensuring the student is safe. I would immediately check on them, ensuring they are with the boat and not panicked. I would then approach in the safety boat, assist them with righting the dinghy if needed, and make sure they are okay. I would communicate with the rest of the group to stay calm and return to shore if conditions are worsening. Afterward, I would review the incident and reinforce safety procedures."

4. Tell me about a time you had to deal with a difficult student or group. How did you handle it?

Why they ask

This behavioural question assesses your conflict resolution and interpersonal skills.

How to structure your answer

Use STAR: Situation, Task, Action, Result.

Example answer

"Situation: I had a student who was nervous and reluctant to take the helm. Task: I needed to build their confidence while keeping the lesson on track. Action: I spent extra time one-on-one, explaining the controls and giving them small, achievable tasks. I also paired them with a supportive peer. Result: By the end of the session, they were sailing independently and even smiling. The group completed all objectives."

5. How would you handle a parent who is concerned about their child's safety during lessons?

Why they ask

This client-facing question tests your communication and ability to reassure while being honest about risks.

How to structure your answer

Show empathy, explain safety measures, and offer a plan to address concerns.

Example answer

"I would listen to their concerns and acknowledge that sailing has inherent risks. I would then explain the safety protocols we follow, such as wearing life jackets, checking weather, and maintaining a low instructor-to-student ratio. I would invite them to observe a lesson and answer any questions. If needed, I would suggest a private lesson to provide extra supervision until they feel comfortable."

6. What steps do you take to ensure vessels and equipment are safe and ready for use?

Why they ask

This tests your attention to detail and understanding of maintenance procedures.

How to structure your answer

List a systematic checklist or routine.

Example answer

"Before each session, I conduct a visual inspection of the hull, rigging, and sails, checking for wear or damage. I ensure all safety equipment, such as life jackets, is present and in good condition. I also

check the weather forecast and tide. After use, I rinse and store equipment properly, and report any issues for repair. I keep a log of maintenance tasks."