

Sheet Metal Worker interview questions

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What to expect

Sheet Metal Worker interviews usually combine a practical trade assessment with a conversation about your experience and how you work. Employers want to know you can read drawings, work safely and produce accurate work without close supervision.

- **Technical trade skills:** Questions and practical tasks that test your ability to read drawings, measure and mark out, operate guillotines and press brakes, and join metal correctly.
- **Safety and compliance:** Questions about WHS, SWMS, working at heights, and how you handle hazards on site or in the workshop.
- **Behavioural:** Questions that ask you to describe past situations, like a time you solved a fabrication problem or dealt with a mistake.
- **Scenario and problem solving:** Hypothetical situations, such as a ducting run that does not fit on site or a drawing that conflicts with the actual build.
- **Process and workflow:** Questions about how you plan a job from drawing to installation, including material ordering and coordination with other trades.
- **Client and site communication:** For roles that involve site work, questions about how you communicate with builders, supervisors and other trades.

A typical interview starts with a short conversation about your trade background and apprenticeship, then moves to technical questions about the tools and processes you use. You might be asked to complete a practical test, such as reading a drawing or demonstrating a fold on a press brake. The interview often ends with site or workshop specific questions about safety, teamwork and availability.

1. Walk me through how you take a job from a drawing to a finished piece of ducting or cladding.

Why they ask

This shows whether you understand the full fabrication process and can plan work efficiently.

How to structure your answer

A walk-through. Start with the drawing or CAD model, then describe measuring and marking out, choosing material, cutting, shaping, joining, and finishing. Mention how you check dimensions and handle any issues.

Example answer

"First I review the drawing or CAD model and check for any dimensions that might be unclear. I work out the material and thickness, then measure and mark out the sheet. I choose the right tool for the cut, like a guillotine for straight cuts or a shear for curves. After cutting, I form the piece on the press brake or fold it by hand, then join it with rivets, seams or welding depending on the spec. Before it leaves the bench I check it against the drawing, and if it is going on site I make sure it is labelled and protected for transport."

2. Tell me about a time you found a mistake in a drawing or a fabrication error. What did you do?

Why they ask

Employers want to see you catch problems early and communicate rather than cover things up.

How to structure your answer

STAR: Situation, Task, Action, Result.

Example answer

"I was fabricating a run of ducting for a commercial fitout, and partway through I noticed the drawing showed a branch takeoff that did not match the site measurement I had taken earlier. I stopped cutting, checked the site dimensions against the drawing and confirmed the discrepancy with the supervisor. We updated the drawing and I adjusted the mark-out before any more material was cut. That saved a full sheet of metal and kept the installation on schedule. I always double-check site dimensions against drawings now."

3. You are on site and the ducting you fabricated does not fit because a beam is in the way. What do you do?

Why they ask

This tests judgement under pressure and how you handle site problems without wasting time or material.

How to structure your answer

A judgement under pressure structure: assess the situation, communicate, find a safe solution, and follow up.

Example answer

"I would stop and assess the obstruction first. I would check the drawing and take a new measurement to see if the ducting can be modified on site, like adding an offset or a flexible connection. If it needs a new piece, I would let the site supervisor know straight away so we can plan the rework and keep other trades moving. I would not force a fit or cut corners, because that affects airflow and safety. Once sorted, I would note the change so the as-built drawings are correct."

4. What is your experience with CNC press brakes and nesting software like Lantek or RADAN?

Why they ask

For roles using CNC equipment, they want to know you can set up, operate and troubleshoot.

How to structure your answer

A technical walk-through of your experience: machines you have used, how you set them up, and how you use nesting software.

Example answer

"I have used CNC press brakes for folding ducting and enclosures, setting up the tooling for the required angles and checking the first piece against the drawing before running the batch. With Lantek, I nest parts to get the best yield from each sheet, grouping similar components and checking the cut path before sending it to the machine. If the machine throws an error, I check the program and the tooling first, then escalate if it is a maintenance issue."

5. How do you manage safety when working on a construction site with sheet metal?

Why they ask

Safety is critical in this trade, especially on site with sharp edges and working at heights.

How to structure your answer

A safety focused answer: hazards, controls, and personal responsibility.

Example answer

"On site I start by checking the SWMS and making sure I have the right PPE, including gloves, eye protection and hearing protection when cutting. I assess hazards like sharp edges, overhead work and other trades nearby. When working at heights I use the correct ladder or EWP and make sure it is set up safely. I keep my work area clear of offcuts and label them for removal. If I see an unsafe situation I speak up and report it, because no job is worth an injury."

6. Give an example of how you have worked with other trades on site to get an installation done.

Why they ask

Sheet metal workers often coordinate with builders, electricians and plumbers, so teamwork and communication matter.

How to structure your answer

STAR or a short narrative with a focus on communication and coordination.

Example answer

"On a recent commercial project, I was installing ducting in a ceiling space while electricians were running cables. We had a clash in one corridor, so I spoke with their leading hand and we agreed on a sequence: they would pull cables first, then I would install the ducting. I adjusted my start time and kept the supervisor informed. The installation went in without damaging their cables or my ducting, and we finished that zone on time."