

Stagehand interview questions

careers.com.au: common questions and what they're really testing

What to expect

Stagehand interviews usually focus on safety, reliability and practical backstage judgement. Employers want to know you can follow cues, handle equipment safely and stay calm when a show is about to start.

- **Safety and process:** Questions about bump in, bump out, hazard checks and WHS procedures.
- **Technical equipment:** Questions about fly systems, lighting consoles, sound desks, rigging hardware and power tools.
- **Behavioural and teamwork:** Questions that ask for real examples of working with stage managers, performers and other crew.
- **Scenario and pressure:** Questions that test your judgement when time is short, equipment fails or priorities conflict.
- **Availability and flexibility:** Questions about casual hours, late finishes, weekends and touring commitments.
- **Client and performer facing:** Questions about taking direction, communicating on headset and supporting performers.

Interviews can be a short conversation with a production manager, head of department or venue crew chief, sometimes after a trial shift or venue walk-through. You may be asked about tickets, PPE, availability and how you handle bump in and bump out. A practical task with a fly system, lighting console or set piece is possible.

1. Walk me through how you prepare a stage area before a bump in.

Why they ask

This tests whether you understand safety, sequencing and crew communication before any equipment moves.

How to structure your answer

Use a step-by-step walk-through: access and load-in route, plans and hazard checks, floor marking, tools and PPE, communication, then final checks.

Example answer

"I start by checking the venue access and load-in route, then review the bump in plan with the head of department. I make sure the floor is clear and mark out set, cable and fly zones. I check PPE, tools and any SWMS or risk assessment, then confirm radio channels and cue calls. Before the crew arrives I test the fly system, clear the stage edge and make sure fire exits and walkways stay open."

2. What experience do you have operating a fly system and moving scenery on cue?

Why they ask

This probes your technical confidence and your safety discipline around moving scenery.

How to structure your answer

Give a technical explanation: system type, pre-show checks, cue discipline, stage awareness and reset routine.

Example answer

"I have worked a counterweight fly system for theatre and live music. Before each session I check the arbors, lines, locks and cues with the head fly. During the show I watch the stage manager's cue light

or call, keep the rail clear and never move a line without checking the stage below. If something feels wrong I stop and call it rather than forcing a move. I also label and reset lines after the show so the next crew starts clean."

3. Tell me about a time a cue change went wrong or equipment failed during a show. What did you do?

Why they ask

This looks for calm problem solving and whether you protect the show and the people on stage.

How to structure your answer

Use STAR: situation, task, action, result. Keep the focus on safety, communication and recovery.

Example answer

"During a theatre run, a set piece jammed on a scene change. My task was to clear the stage before the next cue. I stayed on headset, told the stage manager the piece was stuck, and kept the performer downstage until the deck was safe. I grabbed a spare brace and worked with another crew member to free the piece and reset it quietly behind a blackout. The change went out a few seconds later than planned, but the show stayed safe and the audience did not see the problem."

4. You are asked to make a quick change to a set piece minutes before doors, but the required tool is missing. What do you do?

Why they ask

This tests judgement under pressure and whether you will cut corners or escalate safely.

How to structure your answer

Talk through your judgement: check first, assess urgency, escalate, avoid unsafe shortcuts, document and follow up.

Example answer

"I would check the usual tool areas and the crew kit first, then ask the head of department or stage manager whether the change can wait until interval or after the show. If it is safety critical, I would not rush it with the wrong tool. I would secure the piece, flag the issue on radio and suggest a safe temporary fix only if the stage manager and technical lead agree. If the change can be done later, I would note it on the show report and make sure the right tool is available for the next call."

5. How do you take direction from a stage manager, head fly or performer when priorities conflict?

Why they ask

This checks communication, chain of command and headset discipline under live show conditions.

How to structure your answer

Describe your communication protocol: confirm the show priority, clarify with the department head, repeat back, escalate safety issues, stay calm.

Example answer

"I treat the stage manager's call as the show priority, then clarify with the head of department if two requests clash. If a performer asks for something during a change, I acknowledge it and ask the stage manager whether it can fit the cue. I keep language short on headset, repeat back instructions and never argue on the channel. If it is a safety issue, I stop and say so clearly, then we sort the priority before anyone moves."

6. This role involves casual evening and weekend shifts, sometimes with late finishes and touring. How do you manage that?

Why they ask

This checks reliability, availability and whether you understand the casual live event rhythm.

How to structure your answer

Give an honest practical answer: scheduling, rest, tickets and PPE, notice for changes, reliability.

Example answer

"I have built my work around casual live event schedules, so I plan travel and rest around late finishes and keep my availability up to date. I confirm call times in writing, arrive early for bump in and check the next day's schedule before I leave. For touring, I make sure I have the right licences and tickets current and I pack my own PPE and basic tools. If I cannot take a shift, I give as much notice as I can so the crew chief can cover it."