Stonemason interview questions

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What to expect

Stonemason interviews usually mix practical judgement with trade knowledge. Employers want to see how you handle stone, read a site and keep yourself and others safe.

- **Technical craft and tool use:** Questions about cutting, shaping, setting, mortar and finishes, and the tools you reach for.
- **Safety and hazard control:** Silica dust, manual handling, working at heights and WHS duties on site.
- **Process and planning:** How you read drawings, set out, sequence work and check tolerances.
- **Behavioural and teamwork:** How you work with leading hands, other trades and apprentices.
- **Scenario and problem solving:** What you do when materials, measurements or site conditions do not match the plan.
- **Heritage and restoration:** How you match existing stone, repoint and repair older masonry.

A short phone screen is common, then a face-to-face or site-based interview with a supervisor or project manager. Many employers include a practical component, such as cutting a stone or laying a small section, so bring your own hand tools if asked.

1. Walk me through how you set out and lay a stone wall from a set of drawings.

Why they ask

This tests whether you can read plans, plan a sequence and work to tolerance, which are core stonemasonry skills.

How to structure your answer

A process question. Answer in sequence from drawings to finished wall, naming the checks you make at each stage.

Example answer

“First I read the drawings and check the wall line, dimensions and any details for bond or coursing. I confirm the stone type and quantities against the schedule. On site I set out with a laser level and string lines, marking the corners and checking square. I dry lay a few courses to work out the bond and select stones for face work. I mix mortar to the specified ratio and consistency. I lay the first course on a solid bed, level and plumb, then build up course by course, checking level, line and plumb as I go. I cut stones with a masonry saw or grinder, and finish faces with chisels and mallets where needed. At the end I point the joints, clean down and protect the work.”

2. What steps do you take to control silica dust when cutting stone?

Why they ask

Silica dust is a serious health risk on stonemasonry sites, so employers need to know you understand the controls and will use them.

How to structure your answer

A safety question. Show the hierarchy of controls in order: eliminate, substitute, engineer, administrate, then PPE. Be specific to stone cutting.

Example answer

“Silica dust is a serious hazard, so I start by seeing if I can cut stone outside or use a wet saw. If I have to use a grinder or masonry saw, I use water suppression or an on-tool dust extraction system

with a HEPA filter. I set up exclusion zones and signage so others are not in the dust plume. I wear a fitted P2 or P3 respirator, safety glasses, hearing protection and gloves. I check the extraction and water before I start, and I clean up with wet methods or a vacuum, never dry sweeping. I also follow the SWMS and site rules for silica."

3. Tell me about a time you had to match existing heritage stonework or repair damaged masonry.

Why they ask

Heritage and restoration work is common for stonemasons, and this question shows whether you can match colour, texture, profile and mortar.

How to structure your answer

Behavioural question. Use STAR: Situation, Task, Action, Result. Focus on how you matched the original stone and mortar.

Example answer

"On a restoration job, a section of an old sandstone wall had spalled and lost its face. My task was to replace the damaged stones so the repair blended in. I took a rubbing and a sample of the original stone, then selected matching sandstone from the yard. I cut the new stones to the same height and depth, and dressed the faces by hand with a chisel and mallet to match the tooled finish. I mixed a mortar to match the original in colour and strength, and repointed the joints to the same profile. The supervisor checked it and the repair passed without needing to be redone. It was satisfying to see the wall read as one surface again."

4. You arrive on site and the stone delivered does not match the sample or the drawings. What do you do?

Why they ask

This scenario tests judgement under pressure, communication and whether you will stop work rather than create expensive rework.

How to structure your answer

Scenario question. Show judgement under pressure: stop, check, communicate, document, propose options.

Example answer

"I would stop and not lay the stone. First I check the delivery docket against the drawings and the approved sample, and take photos. Then I let my leading hand or site supervisor know straight away, because laying the wrong stone could mean rework and delays. I would ask if there is a variation approved or if the supplier can swap it. If the stone is close but not exact, I would not make that call on my own. I would document what was delivered and wait for direction. If we can proceed with a written variation, I would record that before starting."

5. How do you work with other trades on a busy site to keep the stonework safe and on schedule?

Why they ask

Stonemasons rarely work alone, and employers want to know you can communicate and sequence work without damaging finished stone.

How to structure your answer

Behavioural and teamwork question. Use a short STAR or describe your approach, focusing on communication and sequencing.

Example answer

"I treat other trades as part of the same job. On a recent project, I had to lay paving near an entrance while electricians were still pulling cables. I checked the program with the supervisor and agreed a

sequence: they finished their runs first, then I laid the paving. I kept my work area tidy and used barriers and signage to keep people off the fresh mortar. If another trade needed access, I worked with them to find a window that did not damage the stone. I also speak up early if a delay is coming, so the supervisor can adjust the program."

6. What experience do you have with different stone types, such as sandstone, bluestone, granite or marble, and how does that change your approach?

Why they ask

This technical question checks your material knowledge and whether you can adapt tools, cutting and finishing to the stone in front of you.

How to structure your answer

Technical question. Compare two or three stones and explain how hardness, grain and finish change tools, cutting and mortar.

Example answer

"I have worked mostly with sandstone and bluestone, and some granite and marble. Sandstone is softer, so it cuts faster but can bruise or spall if you are rough with it. I use sharp chisels and lighter mallet blows, and I keep the saw blade clean. Bluestone is denser and harder, so it needs more power and diamond blades suited to hard stone, and I take shallow passes to avoid overheating. Granite is very hard and abrasive, so I use water-fed saws and check the blade regularly. Marble is softer than granite but can stain, so I keep mortar off the face and seal it if specified. In every case I match the mortar strength and colour to the stone and the job."