

Tiler interview questions

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

What to expect

Tiler interviews are practical and fairly direct. Expect the person interviewing you (often a builder, site supervisor or business owner) to check your trade qualification and licence status early, then move into how you actually work on site: your process for setting out and waterproofing, how you handle problems that come up mid-job, and how you deal with clients when you're on a domestic site.

- **Process:** Questions asking you to walk through how you'd actually do a task, such as setting out a layout or waterproofing a wet area, in the right order.
- **Technical:** Questions checking your knowledge of standards, materials and when to use particular adhesives, membranes or substrates.
- **Scenario/judgement:** A situation is put to you (wrong tiles delivered, substrate out of level) to see how you'd handle it without a supervisor standing over you.
- **Safety:** Questions about tool use, PPE and site hazards, particularly around wet saws, angle grinders and dust.
- **Client-facing:** Questions about handling clients directly on residential jobs where you're the only tradesperson on site that day.

Most tiler interviews start with a quick check of your qualification, licence (if the state requires one) and White Card, then move into process and technical questions about how you set out and finish a job. From there they'll usually give you a scenario to see how you think under pressure, followed by a safety question and something about dealing with clients or builders directly. It often wraps up with practical logistics: your own tools, availability, and whether you can start on their current jobs.

1. Walk me through how you'd set out a tile layout for a bathroom floor before you cut or lay a single tile.

Why they ask

This checks whether you plan before you start, which avoids awkward cuts and wasted material later in the job.

How to structure your answer

Answer as a clear step-by-step walkthrough: what you check first, what you measure, how you mark the layout, and what you confirm before setting any tile.

Example answer

"First I check the room for square and take levels across the floor, because most bathrooms aren't perfectly square to the walls. I find the centre lines and dry-lay a row in both directions to see where the cuts fall, adjusting the starting point so I don't end up with a thin sliver against a doorway or vanity. Once I'm happy with the layout I mark it with a chalk line and take a photo for reference, then start setting from the most visible point in the room outward."

2. What's your process for waterproofing a wet area before tiling, and what standard are you working to?

Why they ask

Waterproofing failures are expensive and this checks you know the correct sequence and the relevant Australian standard, not just the tiling on top.

How to structure your answer

Give a technical explanation covering preparation, the standard you reference, and the sign-off point before tiling begins.

Example answer

"I work to AS 3740 for wet area waterproofing. I make sure the substrate is clean, sound and primed, then apply the membrane to the falls, upstands and any penetrations like the shower drain, building up extra coats at junctions and corners. I leave the correct cure time and do a flood test where the job calls for it before I start tiling, because tiling over a membrane that hasn't cured or hasn't been tested properly is how leaks happen months later."

3. You're partway through a job and realise the tiles delivered don't match the sample the client approved. What do you do?

Why they ask

This is a judgement call that tests whether you protect the client relationship and the job quality rather than pushing ahead to save time.

How to structure your answer

Explain the decision under pressure: what you check immediately, who you contact, and how you avoid making the problem worse before it's resolved.

Example answer

"I'd stop setting any more tile straight away and check the box labels and batch numbers against the order, because sometimes it's a supplier mix-up rather than the wrong product entirely. I'd photograph the discrepancy and call the builder or client before laying any more, rather than assuming it's fine or assuming it needs to be ripped out. If it doesn't match, I'd hold the job until the correct tile arrives rather than finish with mismatched product and leave someone else to sort it out."

4. Tell me about a time you had to fix or rework tiling that didn't meet standard, whether it was your own work or someone else's.

Why they ask

This behavioural question checks how you respond to mistakes and whether you take ownership of quality on site.

How to structure your answer

Use STAR: describe the situation, the task in front of you, the action you took to fix it, and the result once it was resolved.

Example answer

"On a kitchen splashback, I noticed after grouting that a couple of tiles near the power points weren't sitting flush, likely from adhesive drying unevenly under them. Rather than leave it for the client to find, I flagged it to the builder, cut the grout lines, lifted the affected tiles, re-set them with fresh adhesive and re-grouted once cured. The client never saw the issue and the builder mentioned it in a good way when signing off the job, because I'd caught it before handover rather than after."

5. What safety checks do you run before using a wet saw or angle grinder on a residential site?

Why they ask

Cutting tools cause most tiling injuries, so this checks your safety habits rather than just your PPE knowledge in theory.

How to structure your answer

Answer as a practical checklist: what you inspect on the tool, what PPE you wear, and how you manage the work area around you.

Example answer

"Before I start I check the blade condition and guard on the wet saw, make sure the water feed is working properly to control dust, and check the power lead and RCD if I'm on a domestic supply. I wear safety glasses, hearing protection and a properly fitted mask if I'm doing any dry cutting, and I

set the saw up away from foot traffic, particularly if there are kids or other trades moving through the site. I also make sure the area's got good drainage so I'm not creating a slip hazard from the water runoff."

6. A client on a residential job wants a tile pattern that isn't practical for the size of the room or the substrate. How do you handle that conversation?

Why they ask

On domestic jobs you're often the only tradesperson dealing directly with the client, so this checks your communication skills alongside your technical judgement.

How to structure your answer

Describe your approach to the conversation: how you explain the issue clearly, what alternative you'd offer, and how you keep the relationship positive.

Example answer

"I'd explain plainly why the pattern won't work, for example if a large-format diagonal layout would leave awkward cuts in a small ensuite, and back it up by showing them roughly how the cuts would fall. Then I'd offer an alternative that gets close to what they want, like a straight lay with a feature border instead of a full diagonal. Most clients appreciate the honesty rather than finding out after the job's done, and it avoids a dispute over the finished result."