

Waterproofing interview questions

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What to expect

Waterproofing interviews are usually run by a construction manager, site supervisor or the owner of the business rather than a recruiter, so the conversation stays practical. You will be asked how you detail tricky junctions, how you sequence work around other trades, and whether your licence, insurance and paperwork are in order.

- **Technical and code knowledge:** Questions about AS 3740, AS 4654, membrane types, cure times, falls and what a compliant wet area looks like.
- **Process and sequencing:** Walk-throughs of how you take a bathroom or balcony from bare substrate to flood test and handover.
- **Behavioural:** Past examples of defects you found, jobs you rescued, or times you pushed back on a shortcut.
- **Scenario and judgement:** What you would do when a substrate is wet, a builder is rushing you, or a leak appears after handover.
- **Safety:** Working at heights, solvent and membrane fumes, and how you manage a shared site.
- **Client and builder-facing:** How you explain a delay, a defect or an extra to a builder or homeowner without losing the relationship.

Most interviews are a single 30 to 45 minute conversation on site or at the office. It usually starts with your licence, White Card, insurance and recent project list, moves into a detailed walk-through of a wet area you have done, then finishes with a scenario about a defect or a tight program. Some employers ask you to inspect a completed wet area with them or offer a paid trial day before making an offer.

1. Walk me through how you waterproof a bathroom from bare substrate to flood test.

Why they ask

This is the core technical question. The interviewer wants to hear the order of operations and whether you know the standard rather than just slapping membrane down.

How to structure your answer

A process walk-through, in sequence. Name each stage, note what you check before moving on, and mention the standard that governs the work.

Example answer

"First I check the substrate is sound, clean and dry. I measure moisture with a meter and make sure the screed has cured, because membrane over a green screed will blister. I check the falls run to the waste and there are no hollow spots. Then I prime and let it tack off. I apply a bond breaker to the wall and floor junction so movement does not tear the membrane, then tape and detail all the corners, the floor waste, the hob and any penetrations, because that is where leaks start. After that I roll or spray two coats at right angles to each other, checking the film thickness with a wet film gauge. Once it cures I flood test the area to a minimum depth and leave it for 24 hours, check the level has not dropped, and photograph everything for the certificate. Only then do I hand it to the tiler."

2. What do you check before you apply membrane over a screed?

Why they ask

It tests whether you inspect your own work base or just trust what the preceding trade left you.

How to structure your answer

A quick checklist. State the checks, then say what you do if one fails.

Example answer

"I check moisture with a meter, because a screed that looks dry can still be holding water. I check for soundness by tapping for hollow areas and looking for cracks. I check the falls with a level and a straight edge, and I check the waste is set at the right height and the flange is clean. I look for dust, oil or release agent, because nothing bonds to that. If the fall is wrong or the screed is too green, I do not start. I document it, tell the builder in writing, and let them fix it before I prime, because once I membrane over a bad screed the problem becomes mine."

3. Tell me about a time you found a defect or leak that someone else had missed.

Why they ask

It shows whether you inspect with a critical eye and whether you escalate problems properly or quietly cover them up.

How to structure your answer

STAR. Set the scene briefly, describe what you found, what you did about it, and the outcome.

Example answer

"I was called to a completed ground floor unit where the owner kept getting a damp patch near the laundry. The builder assumed the membrane had failed. I checked moisture readings along the wall and they climbed the further I went, so I pulled the skirting and traced it back to a balcony above. The previous waterproofing had been done straight over a dirty substrate with no bond breaker at the wall junction, so the membrane had debonded and water was tracking behind it. I wrote up what I found with photos and moisture readings rather than covering it with sealant, and the builder agreed to redo the balcony properly. The unit was re-tested and passed, and I have done their wet areas since because they know I will find it rather than hide it."

4. You arrive on site and the tiler is waiting to start, but the substrate is still damp. What do you do?

Why they ask

Scenario questions like this probe judgement under pressure, when the pressure to keep the program moving conflicts with doing the job properly.

How to structure your answer

Judgement under pressure. Acknowledge the pressure, give the action you take, then explain the trade-off and who you inform.

Example answer

"I take a moisture reading so I have a number to work with, not just a hunch. If it is over the limit, I cannot membrane it, and no amount of hastening will change that. I tell the tiler straight away so he can move to another area or another job, and I call the supervisor the same hour so the program can be rescheduled rather than discovered at the end of the day. If there is a way to dry the area faster, I will set up what I can. The way I see it, tiling over a wet membrane costs the builder a full strip out and redo, which is far worse than losing a day."

5. How do you keep your work safe when you are on a roof or working at heights?

Why they ask

Waterproofing regularly moves onto roofs, podium decks and edge protection, so employers need to hear a specific, trained answer rather than a general attitude.

How to structure your answer

Safety question. Cover planning, equipment, substances and site conditions, in that order.

Example answer

"Before I start I check the edge protection and the access, because a roof is not a place to improvise. I use the harness and anchor points provided, and if the edge protection is not up to standard I do not start until it is. I plan for the fumes from solvent based products, especially in a basement or a closed balcony, so I use the right respirator and ventilation and I do not put other trades at risk. I keep the work area clear of trip hazards and I cover the products properly, because a membrane drum left open is both a slip and a fume problem. If the weather turns, I stop. No deadline is worth a fall or a chemical inhalation."

6. A builder wants you to skip flood testing to save a day on the program. How do you handle it?

Why they ask

This is a client-facing and integrity question. The interviewer is checking whether you can hold a professional line without damaging the relationship.

How to structure your answer

Professional judgement and communication. Hear the request, explain the consequence, offer a solution, and confirm in writing.

Example answer

"I would not skip it. I would explain that the flood test is the only evidence I have that the membrane is watertight, and that without it my certificate does not mean much. If it goes wrong after tiling, the strip out, the redo and the delays are far bigger than one day. Then I would look for a way to get the day back. Sometimes I can test earlier sections while I finish the rest, or test overnight so the tiler starts first thing. I put the decision and the test results in writing so the builder has it on file for the certifier. Once a builder sees you have saved them from a leak, they stop asking you to cut corners."