

Anaesthetist interview questions

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What to expect

Anaesthetist interviews typically assess clinical judgement, technical skill and teamwork under pressure. Expect a mix of technical questions, scenario-based critical incidents and behavioural questions about communication and safety.

- **Clinical/technical:** Questions on anaesthetic techniques, patient assessment, pharmacology and monitoring.
- **Scenario/critical incident:** How you would manage emergencies such as anaphylaxis, airway loss or cardiac arrest.
- **Behavioural:** Past experiences of teamwork, communication and handling stress.
- **Safety and quality:** Your approach to risk management, incident reporting and continuous improvement.
- **Motivation and fit:** Why you want the role and how you align with the hospital's values.

Interviews usually start with a phone or video screen, then a panel interview with the clinical director, anaesthetists and possibly a hospital executive. For public hospital roles, you may need to address selection criteria. Some processes include a simulated scenario or case discussion.

1. Walk us through your approach to assessing a patient before surgery.

Why they ask

This tests your systematic approach to pre-operative evaluation and risk stratification.

How to structure your answer

Use a chronological walk-through: history, examination, investigations, risk assessment, plan and communication.

Example answer

"First I review the referral and any previous anaesthetic records. Then I take a focused history, asking about comorbidities, medications, allergies and previous anaesthetic problems. I examine the airway, cardiovascular and respiratory systems. I order investigations based on the patient's condition and the surgery planned. I assess risk using tools like the ASA physical status and consider whether I need to optimise any condition before surgery. Finally, I discuss the anaesthetic options with the patient, obtain consent and document a plan."

2. Tell me about a time you managed a critical incident in theatre.

Why they ask

Assesses your ability to stay calm, prioritise and lead during an emergency.

How to structure your answer

STAR: Situation, Task, Action, Result.

Example answer

"During a routine laparoscopic cholecystectomy, the patient developed sudden bronchospasm and desaturation. I immediately increased the inspired oxygen, administered salbutamol via the circuit and deepened anaesthesia. I called for help and coordinated with the surgical team to pause the procedure. I monitored the patient closely and adjusted ventilation. The patient stabilised within minutes and we completed the surgery safely. Afterwards, I debriefed with the team and documented the event."

3. You are Anaesthetist on call and a patient develops anaphylaxis after induction. What do you do?

Why they ask

Tests your knowledge of emergency protocols and ability to act under pressure.

How to structure your answer

Judgement under pressure: prioritise, protocol, communicate, follow up.

Example answer

"I would recognise anaphylaxis immediately by signs like hypotension, rash, bronchospasm or swelling. I would call for help, stop any likely trigger, and administer adrenaline intramuscularly in the appropriate dose. I would secure the airway, give high-flow oxygen, and start fluid resuscitation. I would also give antihistamines and corticosteroids as adjuncts. Throughout, I would communicate clearly with the team and monitor vital signs. After stabilisation, I would document the event, take mast cell tryptase samples, and refer the patient for allergy testing."

4. How do you stay current with advances in anaesthesia?

Why they ask

Shows commitment to professional development and evidence-based practice.

How to structure your answer

Reflective: sources, activities, application.

Example answer

"I maintain my continuing professional development through ANZCA, attending conferences and completing online modules. I read journals like Anaesthesia and Intensive Care and subscribe to safety alerts. I also participate in departmental morbidity and mortality meetings. I apply new evidence by reviewing protocols and discussing changes with colleagues. For example, I recently updated our ultrasound-guided nerve block technique after a workshop."

5. Describe a situation where you had to communicate complex information to a patient or colleague.

Why they ask

Assesses communication skills, empathy and clarity.

How to structure your answer

STAR: Situation, Task, Action, Result.

Example answer

"A patient with severe anxiety about general anaesthesia needed a spinal for hip surgery. I explained the procedure in simple terms, using diagrams and answering questions. I discussed risks and benefits, and reassured her about monitoring. She agreed to the spinal and remained calm throughout. Afterwards she thanked me for taking the time. I also wrote a clear plan for the ward team."

6. Why do you want to work as an anaesthetist in this hospital?

Why they ask

Tests motivation and fit with the organisation.

How to structure your answer

Tailored: link your values, skills and career goals to the hospital's services and culture.

Example answer

"I am attracted to [Company Name] because of its reputation for complex surgery and strong teaching culture. I want to work in a team that values patient safety and continuous improvement. I have

experience in [specific area] and I am keen to contribute to your perioperative service. I also value the opportunity to teach and supervise junior doctors, which aligns with your emphasis on education."