

Bar Useful interview questions

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What to expect

Bar Useful interviews are usually practical and fairly short. Managers want to know you'll turn up on time, work cleanly and keep the bar stocked without being told, so expect questions about routines, hygiene and how you handle a rush.

- **Practical and process:** Questions about how you set up, restock, wash glassware and close a bar. These test whether you already have a routine rather than needing to be walked through every shift.
- **Behavioural and teamwork:** Questions about working alongside bartenders and other bar usefuls during busy trade, including times you had to prioritise or step in.
- **Safety and compliance:** Questions about responsible service of alcohol, food safety, manual handling and what you would do if something looked wrong behind the bar.
- **Customer-facing and scenario:** Questions about running drinks, handling a queue at the bar, or dealing with an impatient customer without pulling a bartender away from service.

Most venues start with a short phone call or a 15-minute chat with the bar supervisor or venue manager, covering availability, RSA and any previous venue experience. If that goes well, you're usually invited to a paid trial shift or working interview during a quieter service period, where you'll be shown the glassie station, the cool room and the POS. The trial is the real interview: they watch how you move, whether you ask sensible questions, and how quickly you pick up the house routine. Larger pubs and clubs sometimes run a group induction covering house policy, RSA expectations and WHS before a first shift.

1. Walk me through how you'd set up the bar for a busy Friday night.

Why they ask

This is the core of the job. The interviewer wants to hear a routine in the right order, not a list of chores.

How to structure your answer

Walk-through in sequence. Move through the bar in a logical order, from checking the roster and bookings to fridges, ice, glassware and the floor, then finish on how you maintain it during service.

Example answer

"First I'd check the roster and the bookings so I know how heavy the night looks and who's on with me. Then I'd walk the bar front to back. Fridges and back bar shelves topped up, ice wells full, garnishes prepped and covered, post-mix and keg levels checked before doors open. I'd make sure every station has polished glassware stacked behind it, so nobody's hunting mid-service. Bins emptied, mats down, floor dry, and the area around the glass washer cleared. During service I keep a loop going: collect glasses, run the washer, restock whatever's low, wipe benches, check ice. If I do that every 20 minutes or so, nothing ever gets to crisis point."

2. Tell me about a time you had to keep up during a rush.

Why they ask

They're checking whether you have a method for pressure, not just whether you can work hard.

How to structure your answer

STAR. Set the scene briefly, describe what was expected of you, explain the specific actions you took, then give the outcome for the team and the customers.

Example answer

"It was a Saturday night in a pub with a function upstairs and a big walk-in crowd downstairs. We normally had two glassies and that night it was just me. I told the bar supervisor I'd drop the table runs

for 20 minutes and focus on glassware so nobody ran dry. I set up two collection points at each end of the bar instead of one in the middle, which meant I wasn't walking through the service well. I kept the washer loaded and stacked polished glasses at every station as I went. Once the first surge eased I picked the table runs back up. The bartenders never had to leave the floor for glasses that night, and the supervisor kept me on that station for the rest of the summer."

3. A customer is clearly intoxicated and asks you to run them a drink from the bar. What do you do?

Why they ask

Responsible service of alcohol isn't only the bartender's job. They want to know you understand your limits and won't quietly serve around the house policy.

How to structure your answer

Judgement under pressure. State your first priority, the action you take within your role, who you escalate to, and how you keep it calm in front of other customers.

Example answer

"I wouldn't run the drink. My role is to support service, not to make that call, so I'd take it straight to the bartender who took the order and let them know what I'd seen. If the customer was getting loud or unsteady, I'd stay nearby so they weren't left alone at the bar, keep my tone friendly and low, and let the bartender or duty manager handle the conversation. If they'd already been refused, I'd back the bartender up and not undercut them with the customer. After it settled I'd mention it to the supervisor so they know what happened and can watch the table. House policy and RSA come first, and a quiet word to the right person is always better than guessing."

4. How do you change a keg safely and cleanly?

Why they ask

It's a technical job they can teach, but they want to see you already know the basics and take hygiene seriously.

How to structure your answer

Walk-through in order. Cover preparation, the change itself, cleaning and the checks you do before walking away from the cool room.

Example answer

"I'd grab the fresh keg first and check the date and the beer type so I'm not pulling the wrong line. Then I'd shut off the coupler, release the pressure slowly so it doesn't spray, and disconnect the line. I wipe down the coupler and the keg connection before it goes on anything new, because that's where contamination gets in. New keg in, connect, open it up and pour a quick taste to check it's not all foam and tastes right. I'd log the keg change if the venue keeps a book, and I'd carry the empty out rather than stacking it in the doorway. Before I leave, I check there's no beer pooling on the cool room floor and the lines aren't dripping."

5. A customer complains that their drinks are taking too long. How do you handle it?

Why they ask

You're often the first person a customer stops. They want to see you can absorb it without pulling a bartender off service.

How to structure your answer

Acknowledge, act, follow up. Deal with the customer first, then take the useful action, then close the loop so they aren't left wondering.

Example answer

"I'd stop what I'm doing and give them my full attention, because being ignored is worse than waiting. I'd apologise for the wait, ask what they ordered and which table they're at, and check where it sits in the queue rather than guessing. If it's coming up, I'd tell them roughly how long and offer to bring it over myself so they don't have to come back to the bar. If it's been missed, I'd take it straight to the bartender with the ticket and get it made next. Then I'd actually deliver it, so the last thing they remember is a drink arriving, not a complaint. If they're still unhappy after that, I'd hand it to the supervisor rather than trying to fix something outside my call."

6. Tell me about a time you and a bartender disagreed about what needed doing first.

Why they ask

Bar support is a teamwork job. They want to know you can push back sensibly and then get on with the work.

How to structure your answer

STAR, with the emphasis on the action. Keep the situation short, be fair to the other person, and finish on what changed afterwards.

Example answer

"During a quiet midweek shift, one bartender wanted me restocking the back bar while another wanted the glassie station broken down and cleaned before the evening crowd. I was caught between the two. I asked them both to give me two minutes, said what I had in front of me and asked which one was urgent, and we agreed the clean came first because it had to be done before trade and restocking could happen with customers in. I got the station done in about half an hour and then restocked both bars before doors. Nothing blew up, and after that I started checking with whoever was on the floor at the start of each shift so we weren't making those calls in the moment."