

Clothing Patternmaker interview questions

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What to expect

Interviews for Clothing Patternmaker roles typically combine a portfolio review with technical and behavioural questions. Employers want to see evidence of your patternmaking process, your proficiency with CAD software, and how you collaborate with designers and production teams.

- **Technical:** Questions about pattern drafting, grading, fit, and CAD software like Gerber AccuMark or Lectra Modaris.
- **Process:** Walk-throughs of how you interpret a design sketch and develop a pattern from start to finish.
- **Behavioural:** Questions about working with designers, resolving fit issues, or managing deadlines.
- **Scenario:** Hypothetical situations such as a design that does not translate to production, or a fit problem with a model.
- **Portfolio-based:** Discussion of your past work, including specific patterns and garments you have developed.

The interview usually starts with a portfolio review, where you discuss your patternmaking work. Then a technical test or CAD assessment may follow, or a series of behavioural and scenario questions with the hiring manager and possibly a designer or production manager. You may also be asked to complete a practical patternmaking task.

1. Can you walk us through your process for drafting a pattern from a design sketch?

Why they ask

This question assesses your technical workflow, attention to detail, and familiarity with both manual and digital methods.

How to structure your answer

Step-by-step explanation of your workflow, from interpreting the sketch to finalising the pattern, including tools used and quality checks.

Example answer

"First, I review the sketch and any spec sheets to understand the silhouette, fabric, and construction details. I then take measurements from the fit model or size chart and start drafting the block, using Gerber AccuMark to create the initial pieces. I check the pattern against the sketch, make any adjustments for ease and seam allowance, and then create a toile for fitting. After fitting on a mannequin or model, I refine the pattern and grade it across sizes. Finally, I prepare the cutting marker and hand off to production."

2. How do you approach grading a pattern to ensure consistent fit across a size range?

Why they ask

This tests your understanding of grade rules, size charts, and how you verify fit consistency.

How to structure your answer

Explain your method for setting grade rules, referencing size charts and fit models, and how you test the graded patterns.

Example answer

"I start by reviewing the base size pattern and the size chart to determine the increments for each grade point. I use Gerber AccuMark to apply grade rules, but I also check the graded nest for any distortion, especially around curves and darts. I then have samples made in key sizes and fit them on models to confirm consistency. If I notice any fit issues, I adjust the grade rules and re-test. I also liaise with production to ensure the graded patterns work with their cutting and sewing processes."

3. Tell me about a time when you had to resolve a fit issue that was causing production delays.

Why they ask

This behavioural question explores your problem-solving skills and ability to work under pressure with other teams.

How to structure your answer

Use the STAR method: describe the Situation, Task, Action, and Result.

Example answer

"In a previous role, we were producing a dress that had a recurring issue with the bust fit, causing delays in sample approval. I analysed the pattern and identified that the dart placement was causing excess fabric. I collaborated with the designer to adjust the dart position and added a small amount of ease. I then tested the revised pattern on a fit model, which resolved the issue. The sample was approved the next day, and production stayed on schedule."

4. Imagine a designer gives you a sketch that is visually striking but difficult to construct. How would you handle it?

Why they ask

This scenario tests your judgement, communication skills, and ability to balance design intent with production feasibility.

How to structure your answer

Outline how you would assess the design, communicate with the designer, and propose solutions that balance aesthetics and manufacturability.

Example answer

"I would first study the sketch to identify the challenging elements, such as unusual seam lines or fabric manipulation. Then I would schedule a meeting with the designer to discuss the construction. I would explain the potential issues and suggest alternative techniques that could achieve a similar look without compromising production efficiency. For example, I might propose a different seam finish or a simpler dart. I would also create a small sample to demonstrate the alternative. My goal is to find a solution that respects the design intent while ensuring the garment can be produced reliably."

5. What CAD software are you proficient in, and how do you use it in your daily work?

Why they ask

This assesses your technical skills and how you integrate software into your patternmaking process.

How to structure your answer

List software and describe specific functions you use, such as digitising, grading, marker making, or 3D simulation.

Example answer

"I am proficient in Gerber AccuMark and Lectra Modaris for pattern drafting and grading. I use AccuMark daily to digitise paper patterns, create grade rules, and generate markers for cutting. I also have experience with CLO 3D for virtual prototyping, which helps me visualise how a garment will drape before making a physical sample. I use Adobe Illustrator to edit tech packs and communicate pattern details to production."

6. Describe a time when you had to work with a tight deadline. How did you manage?

Why they ask

This behavioural question looks at your time management and prioritisation skills in a production environment.

How to structure your answer

Use the STAR method: describe the Situation, Task, Action, and Result.

Example answer

"We had a last-minute order for a capsule collection that required five new patterns in a week. I prioritised the styles based on fabric availability and production schedule. I used my CAD software to draft and grade the patterns quickly, and I scheduled fit sessions back-to-back. I also communicated with the machinist to ensure they had clear instructions. By staying organised and focusing on the critical path, I delivered all patterns on time, and the collection shipped without delay."