Credit Controller interview questions

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What to expect

Credit controller interviews usually combine a conversation about your process with practical scenarios and behavioural questions. Employers want to know you can assess risk consistently, have difficult conversations with customers and keep the ledger moving without creating disputes or losing valuable accounts.

- **Process and technical:** Questions about credit assessment, aged receivables, credit limits, write-offs and the systems you use to manage a ledger.
- **Scenario and judgement:** Situations where a customer wants more credit, disputes an invoice or stops paying, and you need to decide what to do next.
- **Behavioural and relationship:** Examples of negotiating payment plans, managing stakeholders and handling uncomfortable conversations with customers or sales teams.
- **Compliance and risk:** Questions on privacy, credit reporting, ASIC searches, PPSR checks and conduct expectations when contacting customers.
- **Systems and reporting:** How you use SAP, Oracle, Excel, CRM tools and dashboards to prioritise work and report on receivables.

A typical process starts with a phone screen with a recruiter or credit manager, then a face to face or video interview with the credit manager and finance manager. Some employers include a short Excel or credit assessment exercise, and most will ask you to talk through how you would prioritise a live ledger. Smaller teams may combine everything into one longer interview with technical questions and scenario prompts.

1. Walk me through how you assess a new customer credit application and decide on a credit limit.

Why they ask

This is the core technical question for the role. The interviewer wants to see a repeatable process, not a gut feel, and to check you know which Australian information sources and risk factors to use.

How to structure your answer

Define your information sources first, then the risk factors, then the decision and review point. A strong answer moves from financial statements and credit reports to trade references, ASIC and PPSR checks, then states the limit and conditions you would set and how you would review it.

Example answer

“I start with the application, any financials provided and a credit report from a body such as Equifax or illion. For a company I check ASIC for directors, structure and any insolvency history, and PPSR for security interests. I look at how long they have traded, the payment terms requested, industry risk and trade references. Then I compare that to our terms of trade and any existing exposure across the group. If the risk is moderate I might set a limit with tight terms and a review in three months. If information is thin I would ask for a personal guarantee or set a lower limit with cash upfront. I record the rationale so the decision is defensible and reviewable.”

2. Tell me about a time you negotiated a payment plan with a customer who was significantly overdue.

Why they ask

Credit controllers spend a lot of time recovering money without damaging the customer relationship. The interviewer wants evidence you can hold a firm but fair conversation and reach an agreement that actually gets paid.

How to structure your answer

Use STAR. Set the situation and the size of the problem, explain the action you took to understand the customer's position, describe the plan you negotiated and finish with the result, including whether the account kept trading.

Example answer

“At a previous company I had a retail customer who was 90 days past due on several invoices and had stopped responding to emails. I called instead and asked what had changed in their business. They had a temporary cash flow gap because a major debtor had slowed payments. I asked for a current debtor list and proposed a six week plan with weekly direct debits, starting with the oldest invoice. I also paused new orders above a small cash-only limit until the first two payments cleared. They stuck to the plan, cleared the balance and stayed a customer on tighter terms.”

3. A long-standing customer has hit their credit limit and wants an urgent increase, but their payment history has slipped. What do you do?

Why they ask

This scenario tests judgement under pressure. The interviewer is looking for someone who can say no without losing the account, and who knows when to escalate rather than decide alone.

How to structure your answer

Acknowledge the commercial pressure, separate the immediate request from the underlying risk, then set conditions rather than giving a simple yes or no. Show you would gather current information, consider alternatives like partial release, prepayment or a temporary limit, and escalate within policy.

Example answer

“I would not approve it straight away. I would ask for current financials or a debtor list, check their recent payment record and talk to the sales contact about what the order means for the relationship. If the risk looks like timing rather than a deeper problem, I might release part of the order on prepayment or set a temporary limit with a short review date. If there is a genuine cash flow issue I would offer a payment plan on the old balance before increasing exposure. I would document the decision and tell the customer what needs to happen for the limit to stay in place.”

4. How do you use aged receivables reporting and systems like SAP or Excel to prioritise your day?

Why they ask

This checks that you can manage a high volume of accounts without missing the important ones. Interviewers want to hear how you turn a report into a work list and keep records that others can follow.

How to structure your answer

Explain your report sources, the filters you use and the sequence of actions. Link ageing buckets, value, risk and customer history to a daily work list, then say how you record contact and outcomes in the ERP or CRM.

Example answer

“I run the aged trial balance from SAP each morning and sort by bucket, value and account owner. I look at anything over 30 days, but I also check high value accounts before they fall overdue because a quick call then is easier than a collections conversation later. I use Excel to add notes, promised payment dates and next actions, and I update the CRM so anyone covering me can see what was agreed. I work from highest risk and highest value first, but I keep smaller accounts moving with template reminders. At the end of the week I review what is still outstanding and decide what needs escalation to the credit manager.”

5. What compliance issues matter when you are assessing credit or chasing a debt in Australia?

Why they ask

Credit controllers handle personal and commercial information and contact customers about money. Employers need to know you understand privacy, credit reporting and conduct expectations, and that you will not create legal risk for the business.

How to structure your answer

Name the main frameworks and give a practical example for each, rather than listing laws. Cover privacy and credit reporting, ASIC company searches, PPSR checks and conduct expectations when contacting customers, including hardship and avoiding misleading demands.

> **Example answer**
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> *"Privacy is the main one. When I pull a credit report or share account information I need a lawful purpose and I follow the Australian Privacy Principles. If I am assessing a company I use ASIC searches for directors and structure, and PPSR to check whether assets are already secured. When I contact a customer I am clear about the debt, I do not mislead them about consequences, and if they say they are in hardship I follow our policy and consider a payment plan. If a debt may be uncollectible I document the basis for a write-off recommendation rather than making promises I cannot keep. I also keep records of consent and contact so the file stands up to review."*

6. Tell me about a time you had to recommend writing off a debt or declining a credit limit. How did you handle the stakeholder conversation?

Why they ask

This reveals how you balance risk with commercial relationships. Interviewers want to see that you can bring evidence to a difficult conversation and still work constructively with sales or management.

How to structure your answer

Use STAR and show the evidence you gathered, the conversation with the stakeholder and how you separated the relationship from the risk decision. Finish with the outcome and what you learned about managing that kind of pushback.

> **Example answer**
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> *"A sales manager asked me to approve a limit for a new account that had no financials and a director with a recent insolvency. I gathered ASIC and credit report information, looked at the order size and proposed a lower limit with prepayment for the first few orders. The sales manager was frustrated because the customer was ready to sign. I explained the specific risk factors and offered a review after three months of clean payments. We kept the customer on terms we could defend and the account paid on time. When I have recommended a write-off I do the same thing. I show the recovery attempts, the customer's position and why further action is unlikely to be economic. It keeps the decision about evidence, not personalities."*