

Dog Walker interview questions

careers.com.au: common questions and what they're really testing

What to expect

Dog walking interviews are practical and reliability focused. Employers or platform operators want to see that you can handle dogs safely, communicate with owners and keep a schedule without constant supervision.

- **Process and reliability:** Questions about your availability, route planning, punctuality and how you handle a full day of bookings.
- **Animal handling and safety:** Questions about lead control, group management, body language, heat stress and emergency response.
- **Behavioural:** Questions that ask for real examples of handling difficult dogs, owner concerns or scheduling conflicts.
- **Scenario and judgement:** Short situations where you have to decide what to do when something goes wrong on a walk or at pickup.
- **Client communication:** Questions about updates, complaints, boundaries and written communication with owners.
- **Technical and tools:** Questions about pet care apps, calendars, GPS tracking and record keeping.

A typical process starts with a phone or video screen covering availability, experience and police check status. If you progress, there is a meet and greet with the owner and dog, often followed by a trial walk with the owner nearby or a paid trial. Some app based platforms use online onboarding, a background check and a short assessment instead. Final offers usually include a discussion about insurance, ABN arrangements if you are contracting, and emergency procedures.

1. Walk us through how you plan and run a group walk from pickup to drop-off.

Why they ask

This is the core of the job. They want to see that you can manage time, dogs and safety without leaving anything to chance.

How to structure your answer

Use a chronological walk-through. Start with pre-walk checks, cover pickup, the walk itself, toilet breaks, hazards, and finish with drop-off and owner updates.

Example answer

"Before I leave, I check the booking app for any changes, confirm each dog's notes, and pack water, waste bags, leads, harnesses and a basic first aid kit. I check the weather and adjust the route if it is hot or stormy. At pickup, I secure each dog in a crate or with a seatbelt attachment and keep dogs that do not know each other separate. On the walk, I keep the group small, watch body language, and avoid busy roads or off-lead areas unless the owner has approved it. I stop for water and toilet breaks, pick up waste straight away, and keep moving so the dogs stay settled. At drop-off, I dry dogs if needed, check for cuts or ticks, and send the owner a short update through Time To Pet with how the walk went. Then I clean leads and the vehicle before the next pickup."

2. Tell me about a time you had to manage two dogs that did not get along.

Why they ask

Group walks can put dogs together that would not choose each other. They want to hear how you prevent problems and keep everyone safe.

How to structure your answer

Use STAR. Set the scene, explain what you did step by step, and finish with what changed for the dogs and the owner.

Example answer

"I had two regular dogs on the same afternoon slot, and one was reactive to dogs that stared at it. The owner had not mentioned it at first. I noticed the stiff body and hard stare on the first walk, so I kept them on opposite sides and used a parallel walking setup with plenty of distance. I told both owners what I had seen and suggested separate walks for a while. I also started using a front attach harness on the reactive dog and rewarded it for looking back at me. After a few weeks, I could walk them in the same group with one dog ahead and one behind. Both owners appreciated the honesty, and the reactive dog became much easier to manage on lead."

3. You arrive to collect a dog and it is limping, but the owner has already left for work. What do you do?

Why they ask

This tests judgement and care. They want to know you will not walk an injured dog and that you can communicate clearly under pressure.

How to structure your answer

Use a judgement under pressure structure: assess the dog, decide on immediate action, contact the owner, document, and follow up.

Example answer

"I would not take the dog for a walk. I would check the leg gently, look for swelling, cuts or a grass seed, and see if the dog is weight bearing. If it is mild and the dog is comfortable, I would keep it quiet at home, offer water, and call the owner straight away. I would ask whether this is new, whether the dog has a vet appointment, and what they want me to do. If the dog is in pain, cannot bear weight, or the owner cannot be reached, I would contact the vet listed in the client file. I would log the time, what I saw, and who I spoke to in the pet care app. I would also stay with the dog until the owner or a nominated contact takes over."

4. How do you read a dog's body language before it escalates?

Why they ask

Handling skill is central. They want to know you can see stress before it becomes a bite or a fight.

How to structure your answer

Explain the signals in order, then describe how you respond at each stage.

Example answer

"I start with the whole body. A relaxed dog has soft eyes, a loose wag, and an easy gait. Early stress can be a closed mouth, lip licking, yawning, whale eye, tucked tail, or freezing. If I see those, I increase distance from whatever is worrying the dog and check the environment. If the dog stiffens, stares, growls, or air snaps, that is a clear warning and I stop the interaction straight away. I use a calm voice, keep the lead loose, and move the dog out of the situation without dragging or punishing. I note the trigger in the app and tell the owner so we can adjust future walks. I never push a dog past a warning sign."

5. How do you handle a client who complains their dog came home wet and muddy after a walk?

Why they ask

Owner communication can make or break a dog walking business. They want to see that you can listen, solve the problem, and keep the relationship.

How to structure your answer

Use a service recovery structure: listen, acknowledge, explain briefly, offer a fix, and prevent it next time.

Example answer

"I would listen without interrupting and thank them for telling me. I would acknowledge that they were not happy with how the dog came home, even if the walk was in wet weather. I would explain what happened briefly, such as the dog finding a puddle on the usual route, without making excuses. Then I would offer a practical fix: a towel dry before drop-off, a different route in wet weather, or a note in the booking app so every walker knows. I would ask if they want me to bring a towel or avoid a particular park. I would follow up after the next walk to check they were happy. If it happened again, I would review the routine with them."

6. This role can involve heat, rain, difficult dogs and tight schedules. How do you stay reliable and safe across a full day?

Why they ask

They need someone who turns up and manages their own energy and safety. This question checks your routines and boundaries.

How to structure your answer

Give a practical routine: preparation, pacing, boundaries, and contingency plans.

Example answer

"I plan my day the night before. I check the weather, confirm bookings, and group dogs by location so I am not crossing the city. I carry water, shade options in summer, rain gear, towels and spare leads. I take short breaks between walks to drink water and reset, and I do not schedule back to back group walks without travel time. If a dog is unwell or the weather is unsafe, I contact owners early and adjust the plan. I keep my phone charged and use Google Calendar and Time To Pet to track changes. If I am running late, I message the owner as soon as I know. That routine keeps me reliable and keeps the dogs safe."