

Driller's Offsider interview questions

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What to expect

Driller's Offsider interviews focus on safety, physical capability, mechanical common sense and how you work in a small remote crew. Employers want to know you can follow instructions, handle rods and fluids safely, and stay reliable on roster.

- **process:** Step-by-step questions about rig setup, rod handling, fluid mixing and pre-start checks.
- **safety:** Scenario and behavioural questions about hazard controls, PPE, exclusion zones and stopping work when something is unsafe.
- **technical:** Practical questions about tools, rig servicing, fluids, casing and basic mechanical checks.
- **behavioural:** Teamwork and reliability questions drawn from past remote or labouring work.
- **fitness and roster:** Questions about FIFO lifestyle, medical clearance, licences and availability.

Interviews are usually a phone or video screen first, then a face-to-face or site-based interview with a supervisor or drilling manager. You may be asked to complete a safety induction, a medical and a practical walk-through of pre-start checks or manual handling. Some employers run a short group session before one-on-one questions.

1. Walk me through how you set up and level a drill rig at a new hole.

Why they ask

This is the core task and shows whether you understand sequence, communication and safety before drilling starts.

How to structure your answer

Give a clear walk-through: preparation, positioning, levelling, checks, communication and sign-off. Use plain steps and mention the driller's role.

Example answer

"First I check the pad is clear and stable, and confirm the collar position with the driller and survey mark. I guide the rig into place using hand signals and two-way radio, then check the mast is clear of overhead lines and the ground is level. I place the mats or footings, lower the jacks and level the rig using the onboard indicators and a spirit level. Once it is stable, I complete pre-start checks on fluids, hoses, guards and emergency stops. I let the driller know the rig is level and ready, and we record the setup before drilling begins."

2. Tell me about a time you worked with a driller to solve a problem on the rig floor.

Why they ask

They want evidence you can communicate, stay calm and contribute to a fix without overstepping.

How to structure your answer

Use STAR: situation, task, action, result. Keep the focus on your actions and the safety outcome.

Example answer

"We were drilling a hole and the rod cycle slowed because the breakout wrench was not gripping properly. I told the driller straight away and we stopped the rotation. I checked the wrench jaws and found grease and grit built up. I cleaned the jaws, checked the hydraulic hoses for leaks and helped test the wrench on a spare rod. We got the cycle running again and finished the hole before the end of shift. The driller gave me the next rod handling task because he knew I would speak up early."

3. You see a workmate step inside the exclusion zone without a hard hat while the rods are rotating. What do you do?

Why they ask

Safety is non-negotiable and they want to see you act immediately, not wait for someone else.

How to structure your answer

Show judgement under pressure: stop the hazard, warn the person, escalate, then follow up. Do not sound like you would ignore it to avoid conflict.

Example answer

"I would use the two-way radio or hand signal to stop the rotation if I could, or call the driller immediately so the rig is safe. Then I would tell my workmate clearly to step out of the exclusion zone and put on a hard hat. I would let the driller and supervisor know what happened, and I would check whether the exclusion zone signage needed to be moved or replaced. After the shift I would take part in a review so the crew could talk about why the zone matters and how we keep it clear."

4. What experience do you have handling rods and casing, and how do you keep yourself and others safe?

Why they ask

This probes your practical rig floor skills and manual handling awareness.

How to structure your answer

Give a specific example, describe the technique, then explain the safety controls you use.

Example answer

"I have handled rods and casing on exploration and blast-hole rigs. I check the threads and lifting points before moving anything, and I use the rod handler or sling where one is available. I keep my hands clear of pinch points, wear gloves and never stand under a suspended rod. When stacking, I keep the racks level and make sure the area is clear so no one trips over casing. I communicate with the driller by radio before each lift and I stop if the load looks unstable. That routine kept our rod cycle steady and avoided hand injuries on my crew."

5. This role is on a FIFO roster in a remote location. How do you manage the lifestyle and stay reliable?

Why they ask

Employers want to know you understand the roster and can sustain the work without letting the crew down.

How to structure your answer

Be honest about your experience, routine and support network. Explain how you handle fatigue, home life and downtime.

Example answer

"I have worked FIFO before, so I know the roster demands a routine. I sleep properly, eat well and keep up with hydration during shifts. I stay in touch with family on my breaks and I plan my leave so I am not trying to sort out home issues while I am on site. I keep my fitness up because the role is physical and I want to be useful for the whole swing. If I am tired, I speak up early rather than push through and put the crew at risk."

6. Describe how you mix and pump drilling fluids, and what can go wrong if the mix is wrong.

Why they ask

Fluid mixing is a daily task and mistakes can damage the hole, the pump or the crew.

How to structure your answer

Explain the process, the checks, the consequences and how you would correct a problem.

Example answer

"I start by checking the driller's instruction for the mix and the additives we need. I measure the water and additives, add them in the right order and use the mixing hopper or pump to blend them properly. I check the viscosity and weight against the specification before pumping downhole. If the mix is too thin, the hole can collapse or cuttings can build up; if it is too thick, the pump can struggle and we can lose returns. If I see a problem, I stop pumping, tell the driller and adjust the mix before we continue. I keep the area clean and store additives so they do not contaminate each other."