

Exhaust Fitter interview questions

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What to expect

Exhaust fitting interviews are practical. Employers want to know you can fabricate, weld, comply with noise and emissions rules, and talk to customers without overselling. The interview usually mixes a hands-on test with a conversation about your experience.

- **Technical and fabrication:** Questions and tasks about cutting, bending, welding and fitting exhaust components, often with a practical test piece or a vehicle in the bay.
- **Safety and compliance:** Checks on your pre-start routine, PPE, hot work controls and your understanding of noise and emissions limits.
- **Diagnostic and process:** How you isolate a rattle, a leak or a drone, working from likely causes to confirmation.
- **Behavioural:** Past examples of finding unexpected faults, handling comeback repairs or dealing with a difficult job.
- **Scenario and judgement:** What you would do when a customer asks for something non-compliant, or when a job changes scope midway.
- **Client-facing:** How you explain options, ask the right questions and give advice without pushing the most expensive system.

Expect a short practical assessment in the workshop, then a sit-down interview. The practical might involve welding a test piece, fabricating a simple pipe run, or diagnosing a leak. After that, a supervisor or workshop manager will ask about your experience, your approach to safety and compliance, and how you deal with customers. Some employers run a phone screen first. Bring your own PPE and be ready to talk through a recent job you completed.

1. I have got a vehicle in the bay and the off-the-shelf cat-back kit will not clear a tow bar and a long-range fuel tank. Walk me through how you would approach the fabrication and fitment.

Why they ask

This is the core of the job: thinking on your feet when a kit does not fit, and working safely around chassis and suspension.

How to structure your answer

Walk-through: inspect and measure, plan the pipe run, choose material and method, fabricate, fit, test, check clearances and compliance. Mention the points where you would stop and re-measure.

Example answer

"First I would get the vehicle on the hoist and look at the whole run from the dump pipe back. I would check clearance around the tow bar, the tank, the diff and any brake or fuel lines. Then I would measure from the flange to where I want the muffler and tailpipe to sit, allowing for heat expansion and movement. If the kit will not clear, I would cut and re-route the pipe, using a mandrel bend where I can to keep flow up, and MIG or TIG weld the joins. I would tack it first, drop the vehicle, check ground clearance and tip angle, then finish weld. After that, I would run it, check for leaks with smoke or a pressure test, and take a noise reading. If it is over the limit I would add a resonator or change the muffler. Before it leaves I would re-check every clamp and hanger, make sure nothing rubs, and note the work on the job card."

2. What do you check before you raise a vehicle on the hoist and start cutting or welding underneath?

Why they ask

Exhaust work involves hot metal, sparks, fumes and vehicles overhead. Employers want to know your pre-start routine is automatic.

How to structure your answer

Safety checklist: hazard identification, control measures, PPE, housekeeping. Be specific about the workshop, not generic.

Example answer

"I check the hoist arms are under the correct lifting points and the vehicle is balanced before I take it up. I make sure the lock is engaged if I am going underneath. Then I look at what is around me: fuel lines, brake lines, wiring, plastic fuel tanks and any grease or oil that could catch. I move anything flammable away, and I use a welding blanket or heat shield where the torch will be close to the body or tank. I have got my welding helmet, gloves, safety glasses, hearing protection and steel caps on. If I am cutting, I check the area for sparks and know where the fire extinguisher is. At the end I clean up the swarf and check nothing is left on the hoist or floor."

3. Tell me about a time you found a fault during a job that was not what the customer originally described.

Why they ask

Exhaust fitters often find a cracked manifold, a failed sensor, or a leak elsewhere. They want to see how you handle a change in scope.

How to structure your answer

STAR: situation, task, action, result. Keep the result focused on the customer and the vehicle, not on sales figures.

Example answer

"A customer booked in for a cat-back exhaust because they thought the muffler had gone. When I got it on the hoist I found the rear muffler was fine but the flange at the catalytic converter was cracked, and there was a leak at the manifold gasket. I took a photo, showed the customer, and explained that fitting the new cat-back would still leave the leak and the noise. I quoted the extra work to replace the gasket and repair the flange. They approved it, so I did the repair first, then fitted the cat-back. The car passed a noise and leak test, and the customer said it was the first time someone had shown them the problem instead of just replacing parts. They came back for their next service."

4. A customer wants a loud exhaust for their daily driver, but the system you would fit would likely exceed the state noise limit. How do you handle it?

Why they ask

This tests your compliance knowledge and your ability to have a firm but respectful conversation.

How to structure your answer

Judgement under pressure: acknowledge the request, explain the legal limit, offer compliant options, put the customer's choice in writing. Keep it calm.

Example answer

"I would thank them for being clear about what they want, then explain that the exhaust still has to meet the state EPA noise limit and pass a roadworthy if it is tested. I would tell them what the limit is for their vehicle, and I would offer options: a cat-back with a centre muffler and a rear resonator that gives a deeper note without the drone or the risk, or a valved system if they want to be able to close it down for the street. I would be honest that if they go too loud they could get defected or fined, and I would note on the job card what we agreed. If they still insist on a non-compliant setup, I would say I cannot fit that for road use. Most customers appreciate the straight answer because they do not want the hassle either."

5. A car comes in with a rattle at idle and a drone at highway speed. How do you isolate the cause?

Why they ask

Diagnostic skill separates a fitter from a parts changer. They want to hear your process.

How to structure your answer

Systematic diagnosis: listen and reproduce, inspect, test in stages, confirm repair. Work from most likely to least.

Example answer

"I would start by getting the customer to describe exactly when it happens: cold or hot, stationary or moving, what speed. Then I would put it on the hoist and look for obvious contact points: hangers that have perished, heat shields touching the body, a bracket that is cracked, or a pipe sitting too close to the diff or a crossmember. I would shake the system by hand to reproduce the rattle and listen. If I cannot find it, I would run the engine and use a stethoscope or a long screwdriver to pinpoint the noise. For the drone at highway speed, I would check whether it is a resonance from a straight-through muffler, a missing resonator, or a leak at a flange. I would test with a temporary clamp or a different muffler if needed. Once I have found it, I would replace the worn hanger or heat shield, re-align the system, and road test at the speed where the drone happened."

6. How do you explain an exhaust upgrade to a customer who is not sure what they want?

Why they ask

Many exhaust sales are advisory. They want to see you can listen, ask the right questions and give options without overselling.

How to structure your answer

Consultative: ask about the vehicle, how they use it, what they want to change, then present two or three options with trade-offs. Check understanding and confirm.

Example answer

"I would start by asking what they like and do not like about the current exhaust: is it too quiet, does it drone on the highway, do they tow, do they go off-road? Then I would explain the difference between a cat-back and a full system, and between mild steel, aluminised steel and stainless. I would talk about sound, flow, weight and how long the system will last. I would give them two or three options at different price points and be clear about what each one changes. I would also mention what is legal on the road. Then I would ask if they want to hear a car with a similar setup, if we have one on site. I would not push the most expensive option if a simpler one suits how they actually drive. Once they choose, I would confirm the work in writing before I start."