

# Fishing Guide interview questions

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## What to expect

Fishing Guide interviews are practical and conversational. The operator is checking whether you can run a day safely, keep clients catching fish and handle yourself when the plan changes.

- **Marine safety and compliance:** Briefings, lifejackets, EPIRB and radio use, bag and size limits, marine park zones and how you enforce them with a paying client.
- **Trip planning and judgement:** How you read tides, wind, swell and forecasts, choose spots and decide whether to run or cancel a trip.
- **Client-facing and instructional:** Coaching different skill levels, managing seasickness, kids, alcohol and the occasional difficult customer.
- **Behavioural:** Past experience told as stories: a trip that went wrong, a client you turned around, a busy day you kept organised.
- **Practical or on-water:** Boat handling, anchoring, knots, rigging a bait or lure, filleting a fish and demonstrating a safety brief in person.

Most roles start with a phone or in-person chat with the owner or head guide, covering your tickets, local knowledge and availability. Shortlisted candidates are usually invited out for a paid or unpaid day on the water, where you'll handle the boat, brief a group and fish alongside the crew. The operator is watching how you talk to clients, how you read conditions and whether you're safe without being supervised.

## 1. Walk me through how you plan a full day charter, from the booking to the ramp at the end.

### Why they ask

This shows whether you actually run trips or just fish. Operators want to hear a repeatable process, not a vague answer about following the fish.

### How to structure your answer

Chronological walk-through. Start with the booking and client details, move through the forecast and tide check, spot selection with a fallback, pre-departure checks, the brief, the fishing day and the cleanup. Flag your decision points as you go.

### Example answer

*"I start with the booking: who's on board, experience levels, whether there are kids, and what they actually want to catch. Then I check the tide and the BOM forecast the night before and again at first light, and pick two or three spots, a primary and a fallback, so I'm not stuck in one area if the wind shifts. I run through fuel, oil, battery, bungs, lifejackets and the EPIRB, and load bait and tackle to suit the target species. At the ramp I do the safety brief and the fishing rules, then head out. If the bite is quiet I move rather than sit on it, and I always keep enough time at the end to clean and fillet the catch back at the ramp."*

## 2. The forecast is marginal. How do you decide whether to run the trip?

### Why they ask

This is the judgement question. They want to know you'll cancel when you should, and that you can explain a cancellation to a client without losing them.

### How to structure your answer

Risk framework. Conditions, then client capability, then forecast confidence, then your no-go threshold, then how you communicate it.

#### Example answer

*"I look at the trend rather than one number. A steady ten to fifteen knots is a different day from a rising twenty with wind against tide. Then I weigh who's on board, because a boat of experienced fishos can handle water that would be miserable and unsafe for a family with young kids. I check whether there's a sheltered alternative, like moving from outside to an estuary or a protected bay. If it's above my limit or the fallback is no good, I cancel early, the night before if possible, and I ring every client rather than sending a text. I offer a reschedule first and a refund if that doesn't work, and I explain the reason plainly so they trust the call."*

### 3. Tell me about a time a client couldn't cast, or was really struggling to catch anything.

#### Why they ask

Guiding is teaching. They want to see that you can diagnose a problem and adjust your approach instead of leaving the client to flounder.

#### How to structure your answer

STAR, with the emphasis on the action and what the client ended up doing differently.

#### Example answer

*"I had a client on a bait fishing trip who had fished his whole life but kept missing hook-ups on soft plastics, and you could see him getting frustrated. I watched a few casts and the issue was his retrieve, he was winding too fast and not feeling the lure. I stopped the trip for five minutes, showed him a slow lift and drop, and let him feel the difference with his eyes closed on a short cast near the boat. Once he had the action right, I put him on a patch of flathead and he landed four in the next hour. He booked again the next season, which mattered more to me than the tip."*

### 4. A client brings an undersize or out of season fish onto the boat. What do you do?

#### Why they ask

A compliance and backbone question. The operator needs to know you'll enforce the rules on your boat even when a paying customer pushes back.

#### How to structure your answer

Rule, action, conversation. State the rule, say what you physically do, then how you handle the client.

#### Example answer

*"The fish goes back, and I do it myself, gently, rather than handing it to the client and hoping. I don't turn it into a lecture, I just say we release anything under the limit and keep it matter of fact. Then I use it as a teaching moment, I show them the size gauge on the brag mat and explain why the limit exists, and I point out we're on a patch where legal fish are sitting. If someone keeps pushing, I remind them the rules apply on my boat and that the fine lands on me, not them. It has never gone further than that."*

### 5. What does your pre-departure safety brief cover?

#### Why they ask

The core technical question. They're checking you know the equipment on a small commercial vessel and can deliver the brief in plain language, not jargon.

#### How to structure your answer

List-driven and ordered. Work through the boat, the gear, the people and the what-ifs, in the order you'd actually say it.

#### Example answer

*"I start with the boat itself, where the exits are, where the fire extinguisher is, and where they sit while we're moving. Then lifejackets, everyone gets shown theirs and put it on if they're under the age or*

*can't swim, and I explain when I'll ask them to wear one. I point out the VHF radio and the EPIRB and say what they do, which is nothing unless I tell them. After that it's the rules for the day: no moving around when we're underway, tell me if you feel seasick early, and how we handle hooks, particularly on a crowded deck. I finish with a man overboard plan and what to do if I go in, because they need to know which button to press."*

## **6. Describe a time something went wrong on the water and how you handled it.**

### **Why they ask**

A test of composure. Operators know things go wrong, what they don't want is someone who freezes or hides a problem from the client.

### **How to structure your answer**

STAR, then a short reflection on what you changed afterwards. Keep the client experience in the story, not just the mechanical fix.

### **Example answer**

*"I had an outboard start to run rough about four kilometres from the ramp with four clients on board, in a rising chop. I killed the motor, told the clients plainly what was happening and that we were fine, dropped the anchor to hold position and got the radio out. I did a quick check of the fuel line and primer bulb, found a kink, fixed it and started up. Rather than pushing back out, I ran us home slow along the sheltered side. The clients were fine about it, one of them said it was the safest he'd felt on a charter. After that trip I added a fuel line and primer check to my pre-departure list, and I now carry a spare primer bulb."*