

Fitter interview questions

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What to expect

Interviews for fitter roles typically blend practical trade knowledge with safety awareness and behavioural questions. Employers want to know you can work to tolerance, diagnose faults under pressure and fit into a site team safely.

- **Technical knowledge:** Questions on reading drawings, measuring, machining, alignment and maintenance procedures.
- **Safety and compliance:** How you manage hazards, follow WHS procedures and use permits and PPE.
- **Problem-solving scenario:** A fault or breakdown scenario to test your diagnostic approach and judgement.
- **Behavioural:** Past examples of teamwork, reliability and handling pressure or conflict.
- **Process and experience:** Walk-through of your apprenticeship, previous roles and familiar tools and systems.
- **Client-facing or site-based:** How you communicate with supervisors, clients or other trades on site.

A typical process starts with a phone screen with a recruiter, then a face-to-face interview with a maintenance supervisor or workshop manager. Some employers include a practical test, such as machining a part to tolerance or diagnosing a fault on a test rig. A site walk-through may follow to assess your safety awareness and fit with the team.

1. Walk me through how you would approach installing and aligning a new pump on site.

Why they ask

This tests your practical process knowledge, from reading drawings to commissioning, and your awareness of alignment tolerances.

How to structure your answer

A step-by-step walk-through: preparation, positioning, alignment, connection and commissioning.

Example answer

"First, I would review the installation drawings and confirm the pump model and baseplate dimensions. I would check the site for access, lifting equipment and any permits needed. After positioning the pump, I would use a precision level to ensure the baseplate is flat and level. Then I would align the pump to the driver using a dial gauge or laser alignment tool, checking for both parallel and angular misalignment. Once aligned, I would connect the piping, ensuring no strain is transferred to the pump casing. Finally, I would commission the pump, checking rotation, flow and vibration, and record the alignment readings for future reference."

2. Tell me about a time you diagnosed a mechanical fault that others had missed.

Why they ask

This assesses your diagnostic reasoning, persistence and ability to follow a systematic process.

How to structure your answer

STAR: Situation, Task, Action, Result.

Example answer

"Situation: A production line kept tripping on an overload fault, and the previous shift had replaced the motor without success. Task: I was asked to investigate. Action: I listened to the drive and noticed an irregular knocking. I checked the gearbox oil and found metal particles. I then used a dial gauge to check shaft alignment and discovered the gearbox output shaft was bent. Result: I replaced the gearbox and realigned the drive, which eliminated the fault and restored production for the rest of the week."

3. You notice a workmate has bypassed a safety guard to speed up production. What do you do?

Why they ask

This tests your safety judgement, courage to speak up and understanding of WHS responsibilities.

How to structure your answer

Judgement under pressure: immediate action, escalation, follow-up.

Example answer

"I would immediately stop the machine or isolate it if safe to do so, and tell my workmate that bypassing the guard is unsafe and against procedure. I would then report the incident to my supervisor, explaining what I saw and what I did. I would also suggest a toolbox talk or review of the task to find a safer way to maintain production speed. My priority is always that everyone goes home safe, and I would not ignore a risk like that."

4. How do you ensure you work to fine tolerances when machining a part?

Why they ask

This probes your measurement technique, tool selection and attention to detail.

How to structure your answer

Technical explanation: preparation, measurement, verification, documentation.

Example answer

"Before starting, I check the drawing for the critical dimensions and tolerances. I select the right cutting tools and set up the job securely. I use micrometers and verniers that are calibrated, and I take multiple measurements as I machine, allowing for tool wear and temperature. For very fine tolerances, I use a dial gauge or bore gauge to verify. I always double-check my final part against the drawing before removing it from the machine, and I record the readings if required."

5. Describe your experience with hydraulic and pneumatic systems. What maintenance tasks have you performed?

Why they ask

This checks your familiarity with fluid power systems, which are common in plant and machinery.

How to structure your answer

Experience summary: systems worked on, tasks performed, safety considerations.

Example answer

"I have worked on hydraulic systems up to 200 bar, including pumps, valves, cylinders and accumulators. I have replaced seals, hoses and fittings, and I have bled systems to remove air. On the pneumatic side, I have maintained compressors, air lines, filters and actuators. I always isolate and depressurise before working on any system, and I follow lock-out tag-out procedures. I also inspect for leaks and check oil condition as part of preventive maintenance."

6. Give an example of a time you had to work under a tight deadline to get a machine back online.

Why they ask

This assesses your ability to prioritise, work under pressure and communicate with production staff.

How to structure your answer

STAR: Situation, Task, Action, Result.

Example answer

“Situation: A critical conveyor drive failed during a peak production run. Task: I needed to get it running as quickly as possible without compromising safety. Action: I quickly diagnosed a failed bearing, sourced a replacement from the store and organised a fitter's assistant to help. I worked methodically, keeping the production supervisor informed of my progress and any delays. Result: I had the conveyor running again within three hours, which allowed the shift to meet its target. I then completed a failure report to prevent a repeat.”