

Furniture Finisher interview questions

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What to expect

Furniture Finisher interviews focus on practical finishing skills, safety awareness and your ability to match colours and meet quality standards. Employers want to see that you can work methodically and solve finishing problems on the spot.

- **Technical and process:** Questions about sanding sequences, stain mixing, spray gun settings and polishing techniques.
- **Safety and compliance:** Questions about chemical handling, spray booth ventilation, PPE and WHS procedures.
- **Behavioural:** Questions about past experiences with quality control, deadlines or difficult finishes.
- **Scenario and problem-solving:** Questions about fixing defects, colour mismatches or client complaints.
- **Client-facing:** Questions about explaining finish options and managing expectations.
- **Practical test:** A hands-on task such as preparing and finishing a sample piece or matching a colour.

Typically a single interview with a workshop supervisor or production manager. You might start with a tour of the spray booth and finishing area, then answer technical and safety questions. Many employers include a short practical test where you sand, stain or spray a sample. The interview usually ends with a chance to ask questions about the workshop and its projects.

1. Walk me through how you prepare a timber surface for finishing, from bare timber to final coat.

Why they ask

To see if you understand the full finishing process and can sequence steps correctly.

How to structure your answer

A step-by-step walk-through. Start with inspection, then sanding grits, grain raising, stain application, sealing, spraying and polishing. Mention checks along the way.

Example answer

"First I inspect the timber for defects like glue marks or dents. Then I sand with 120 grit, moving to 180 and 240, always with the grain. I raise the grain with a damp cloth, let it dry, then sand lightly with 320. Next I mix the stain to match the sample and apply it with a brush or rag, working in sections. Once dry, I seal the surface, then spray lacquer in the booth, adjusting the gun for even coverage. Finally I polish and buff to the required sheen, checking under good light."

2. Tell me about a time you noticed a finish defect before it reached the client. What did you do?

Why they ask

To assess your attention to detail and how you handle quality issues.

How to structure your answer

STAR: Situation, Task, Action, Result. Keep it specific and focus on what you did.

Example answer

"At my last workshop, I was inspecting a set of dining chairs after polishing. I noticed a small run in the lacquer on one leg. The chairs were due to be dispatched that afternoon. I told my supervisor, sanded back the affected area, reapplied lacquer, and matched the sheen to the rest of the chair. The chairs

went out on time and the client did not raise any issues.”

3. How do you manage safety when working with solvents and spray equipment?

Why they ask

To check that you know WHS requirements and can work safely with chemicals.

How to structure your answer

Use a hazard-control structure: identify hazards, then explain controls like ventilation, PPE, storage and emergency procedures.

Example answer

“Before I start, I check the spray booth ventilation is working and the filters are clean. I wear a respirator, gloves, and eye protection. I store solvents in the flammable goods cabinet and keep them away from ignition sources. I follow the safety data sheets and the site's safe work method statement. If I notice any issue with the booth or equipment, I stop and report it.”

4. A client rejects a stained table because the colour is too red compared to their sample. How do you fix it?

Why they ask

To see how you judge a problem under pressure and your colour-matching skills.

How to structure your answer

A judgement-under-pressure structure: stay calm, diagnose the cause, test a solution, then confirm with the client before final work.

Example answer

“I would first compare the sample and the table under the same lighting to confirm the difference. Then I would check my stain mix and application method. If the colour is too red, I might need to sand back the table and re-stain with a cooler, more neutral tone. I would test the new mix on an offcut and show the client before redoing the whole top. Once approved, I would reapply the stain and finish, then inspect carefully.”

5. What spray gun settings do you adjust for different finishes, and why?

Why they ask

To test your technical knowledge of spray equipment and finish types.

How to structure your answer

A technical explanation: name the settings, explain what each does, and give examples of adjustments for different products.

Example answer

“I adjust fluid flow, air pressure, and fan pattern. For a thin sealer, I use lower fluid flow and moderate air pressure so it doesn't run. For a thicker lacquer, I increase fluid flow and air pressure to get good atomisation. I also set the fan pattern wider for large flat panels and narrower for edges or detailed areas. I always test on cardboard or an offcut before spraying the actual piece.”

6. How do you handle a client who wants a custom finish that you think might not wear well?

Why they ask

To see if you can balance client expectations with practical finishing knowledge.

How to structure your answer

A listen-and-advise structure: acknowledge the request, explain the trade-offs, offer alternatives, and document any decision.

Example answer

"I would listen to what they want and ask about how the piece will be used. Then I would explain the durability issues with that finish, for example a very matte finish might mark easily. I would show them samples of alternative finishes that give a similar look but wear better. If they still want the original, I would document that we discussed the risks and then do the best possible application."