

Gunsmith interview questions

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What to expect

Interviews for gunsmith roles focus on practical trade skills, safety and compliance, and how you handle customers and licensing requirements. Employers want to see that you can diagnose faults, work precisely, and keep accurate records.

- **Technical trade skills:** Questions about machining, hand fitting, stock work, and the tools you use, such as lathes, milling machines, and headspace gauges.
- **Safety and compliance:** Questions about firearms licensing, record-keeping, and how you ensure each firearm is lawful to return to the owner.
- **Fault diagnosis and problem solving:** Questions that ask you to work through a repair or accuracy issue step by step.
- **Client-facing and service:** Questions about explaining repairs, managing expectations, and handling customer firearms.
- **Behavioural:** Questions that ask for examples of teamwork, attention to detail, or handling mistakes.
- **Process and workshop organisation:** Questions about scheduling, prioritising jobs, and managing parts and turnaround.

Typically, you will have a short phone screen, then a workshop interview with a practical test such as assembling or inspecting a firearm, followed by a conversation with the owner or senior gunsmith. Some employers ask you to complete a small machining task or explain a compliance scenario.

1. Walk me through how you would diagnose a rifle that is shooting inaccurately.

Why they ask

This is a core technical question that shows whether you can work systematically from the most likely causes to the less common ones.

How to structure your answer

Use a step-by-step walk-through. Start with the shooter and ammunition, then check the scope mounts and action screws, inspect the crown and bore with a borescope, and finally check headspace and bedding.

Example answer

"First, I would ask about the ammunition and shooting position, because inconsistent ammo or technique can cause accuracy issues. Then I would check the scope mounts and action screws for tightness. Next, I would inspect the crown for damage and run a borescope through the bore to look for copper fouling, throat wear, or pitting. After that, I would use headspace gauges to check headspace and inspect the bedding for movement. If everything looked fine, I would test fire with a known accurate load to see if the issue is the rifle or the shooter."

2. How do you ensure a firearm meets state and territory licensing requirements before it leaves the workshop?

Why they ask

Compliance is non-negotiable in this trade. Employers need to know you understand your legal obligations and can keep accurate records.

How to structure your answer

Use a checklist approach. Describe the steps you take from receiving the firearm to returning it, and mention the records you keep.

Example answer

"When a firearm comes in, I record the serial number, make, model, and the owner's licence details. I check that the firearm is registered to the owner and that any repair or modification is allowed under the relevant state or territory legislation. If a permit to acquire is needed for a new firearm, I confirm it is valid before proceeding. Before the firearm leaves, I update the dealer record-keeping system, note the work done, and confirm the owner's identity when they collect it. I never release a firearm without completing these checks."

3. Tell me about a time you made a mistake on a repair. How did you handle it?

Why they ask

This behavioural question tests honesty, accountability, and whether you learn from errors in a safety-critical trade.

How to structure your answer

Use STAR. Describe the situation, the task, the action you took, and the result, including what you changed afterwards.

Example answer

"Situation: I was fitting a new stock to a customer's rifle and accidentally overtightened an action screw, cracking the wood near the recoil lug. Task: I needed to fix it without compromising safety or the customer's trust. Action: I immediately told my supervisor, then repaired the crack with a hardwood dowel and epoxy, and refinished the area. I also test fired the rifle to confirm accuracy. Result: The repair was invisible and the rifle shot well. I now use a torque wrench for every action screw and double-check my work before test firing."

4. A customer brings in a firearm with a cracked stock and wants it ready for a competition in three days. What do you do?

Why they ask

This scenario question tests your judgement under pressure, your ability to manage expectations, and your practical problem solving.

How to structure your answer

Work through it as a judgement call. Assess the damage, decide what is feasible, communicate clearly, and offer options.

Example answer

"First, I would inspect the crack to see if it is cosmetic or structural. If it is structural, a safe repair may need a replacement stock or a professional bedding job, which might not be possible in three days. I would explain this to the customer, then offer options: a temporary repair that is safe for the competition but needs further work, or a loaner stock if I have one. If I can do a safe repair in time, I would prioritise it and keep the customer updated. I would never rush a repair that could compromise safety."

5. How would you explain to a customer that their firearm needs a major repair they weren't expecting?

Why they ask

This client-facing question checks your communication skills and whether you can deliver bad news without losing the customer's confidence.

How to structure your answer

Use an empathy-first approach. Acknowledge the customer's disappointment, explain the issue in plain language, and give clear options with costs and timeframes.

Example answer

"I would start by saying I understand this is not what they wanted to hear. Then I would show them the problem, using a borescope or the damaged part, and explain in plain language why it is unsafe to use without repair. I would give them a written quote with options: a full repair, a partial repair, or a replacement part. I would also explain the timeline for each option. Finally, I would ask if they have any questions and let them decide without pressure."

6. How do you organise your workshop when you have multiple jobs with different deadlines?

Why they ask

This process question looks at your planning, prioritisation, and whether you can keep a small workshop running smoothly.

How to structure your answer

Describe your system. Mention how you assess urgency, group similar tasks, and communicate with customers.

Example answer

"I start each day by reviewing all open jobs and their deadlines. I prioritise safety-critical repairs and jobs with fixed customer commitments, like a competition or hunting trip. I group similar tasks, such as all the machining for the week, to save setup time. I keep a whiteboard with job numbers and status so anyone in the workshop can see what is next. If a job is going to be late, I contact the customer as soon as I know, not on the day it is due. I also keep parts organised by job so nothing gets mixed up."