

Interior Decorator interview questions

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What to expect

Interior Decorator interviews usually blend a portfolio conversation with practical questions about process, client management and software. Employers want to see how you think about a space, how you handle real budgets and timelines, and how you communicate with clients and trades.

- **Process questions:** These ask you to walk through your design process from brief to handover. They test your organisation and whether you can explain your decisions clearly.
- **Behavioural questions:** These ask for real examples of client challenges, deadlines or budget changes. They show how you work under pressure and how you learn from experience.
- **Scenario questions:** These put you in a hypothetical situation, such as a small budget or a difficult room, and ask how you would approach it. They reveal your creative problem-solving.
- **Technical and software questions:** These check your knowledge of colour, materials, spatial planning and tools like SketchUp, AutoCAD or Excel. You may be asked to describe your workflow or solve a layout problem.
- **Client-facing and communication questions:** These focus on how you present ideas, manage expectations and build trust with clients. They are common because decorating is a relationship-heavy role.

Typically a first interview with a studio principal, retail manager or hiring manager. You will discuss your portfolio and may be asked to walk through a project in detail. A second interview might involve a short design exercise, a mood board task or a site visit. For freelance or retail roles, the conversation is often more informal and may include a product knowledge test or a role-play with a client.

1. Walk me through how you take a project from first client meeting to final styling.

Why they ask

This is a core process question. It shows whether you can manage a project end to end and whether you have a repeatable method for keeping clients informed.

How to structure your answer

Use a clear sequential walk-through. Start with the brief, then move through concept, sourcing, coordination and handover. Name the tools and checks you use at each stage so the interviewer can see your system.

Example answer

"At the first meeting I ask about how they use the room, what they want to keep, and their budget range. I then measure the space and prepare a mood board with two or three colour directions. Once they choose, I put together a furniture and finishes schedule in Excel, source samples from suppliers, and confirm lead times. I coordinate trades for painting, flooring and window treatments, and I do a site check before installation. On handover day I style the room, adjust lighting and accessories, and walk the client through what was done. I follow up a week later to check they are happy and note anything that needs adjusting."

2. Tell me about a time a client changed their mind halfway through a project. How did you handle it?

Why they ask

This behavioural question tests flexibility, client communication and budget control. Employers want to know you can adapt without losing the client's trust or blowing the schedule.

How to structure your answer

Use STAR: describe the situation, the task, the action you took and the result. Focus on how you listened, re-presented options and kept the project on track.

Example answer

"The client had approved a colour scheme for their lounge room, then after the first coat of paint they decided it felt too cool. I asked what specifically felt wrong, and they said they wanted something warmer but still light. I went back to my samples and brought three warmer neutrals, explaining how each would read in morning and evening light. We chose a new shade, I checked the paint order could be changed without extra cost, and I updated the schedule so the painter could return two days later. The room finished on time and the client later asked me to style their hallway."

3. You are styling a small apartment for a client with a limited budget. How do you make it feel considered and not crowded?

Why they ask

This scenario question tests creativity under constraints. It shows how you prioritise spending and solve spatial problems without overfilling a room.

How to structure your answer

Treat it as a judgement-under-pressure question. Talk through your priorities, what you would cut, and how you would explain trade-offs to the client. Show your reasoning step by step.

Example answer

"I would start by asking which pieces they already own and love, because reusing furniture saves money and keeps the space personal. Then I would focus the budget on one or two key items, like a sofa or a rug, and choose lower-cost options for accessories and lighting. I would use a light colour palette and mirrors to make the room feel bigger, and I would measure carefully so nothing blocks walkways. I would show the client a mood board with a clear plan, explain what we are not doing yet, and suggest a second phase if they want to add more later."

4. What software do you use for spatial planning and presentation, and how do you use it in a project?

Why they ask

This technical question checks your practical tool skills. It also shows whether you can connect software to a real workflow rather than listing programs.

How to structure your answer

Give a straightforward demonstration of your workflow. Name each tool, say what you use it for, and briefly explain how they connect from sketch to client presentation.

Example answer

"I use SketchUp for quick 3D layouts so clients can see how furniture will sit in the room, and AutoCAD when I need accurate floor plans for builders or trades. I use Adobe Photoshop to refine mood boards and Canva for simple client-facing presentations. Microsoft Excel is where I track budgets, orders and lead times. In a typical project I start with a hand sketch, move to AutoCAD for measurements, then build a SketchUp model and export views for the mood board. That combination keeps the client clear on the design and the trades clear on the dimensions."

5. How do you present a design concept to a client who is nervous about making the wrong choice?

Why they ask

This client-facing question tests empathy and communication. It shows whether you can simplify choices and build a client's confidence without being pushy.

How to structure your answer

Answer with a short narrative that shows how you read the room, narrow the options and confirm decisions in writing. Keep the focus on the client's feelings and your process.

Example answer

"I start by acknowledging that it is a big decision and that many clients feel the same. I narrow their options to two or three schemes rather than presenting everything, and I explain the reasoning behind each one, including how it will feel in the space at different times of day. I bring physical samples so they can touch the fabrics and see the colours in their own light. I ask questions about how they live and what they want to feel in the room, then I make a recommendation. Once they decide, I confirm the details in writing so they have a record and feel secure."

6. How do you manage suppliers and trades to keep a project on schedule?

Why they ask

This question tests project management and communication with external partners. It shows whether you are proactive about delays and clear with clients when things change.

How to structure your answer

This is a process and problem-solving question. Outline your system for tracking orders and bookings, then give a concrete example of a time you caught a delay early and what you did.

Example answer

"I keep a schedule in Excel with order dates, lead times, delivery windows and installation days. I confirm every order in writing and check in with suppliers a week before delivery. For trades, I book them in sequence and make sure the site is ready before they arrive. On one project the curtain maker told me the fabric was delayed by a week. I called the client straight away, explained the new date, and arranged for the furniture installation to go ahead first so the room was usable. I then rebooked the curtain maker for the following week and checked the final fit myself. The client appreciated knowing early rather than being told on the day."