

Leather Goods Maker interview questions

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What to expect

Interviews for Leather Goods Maker roles usually combine a conversation about your experience with a practical assessment and a look at your portfolio. Employers want to see how you handle leather, tools and design files, and how you work within a small team.

- **Technical skills:** Questions about your methods for cutting, stitching, finishing and assembling leather, including which tools and machines you use.
- **Process and workflow:** Walk-throughs of how you take a job from pattern to finished product, and how you organise your bench and batch tasks.
- **Behavioural:** Past examples of dealing with quality issues, deadlines, difficult repairs or working with clients on bespoke orders.
- **Scenario and judgement:** Hypothetical problems such as a flaw in a hide, a machine fault or a customer complaint, to see how you think on your feet.
- **Safety:** Questions about workshop safety, tool handling, manual tasks and keeping a clean, hazard-free bench.
- **Client-facing:** For roles that involve custom work or repairs, how you listen to a customer, explain options and manage expectations.

The interview often starts with a tour of the workshop and a look at your portfolio or samples. Then you might sit down for a one-on-one or panel conversation covering your background and technical knowledge. Many employers include a short practical task, such as cutting a simple pattern or stitching a seam, and some ask you to talk through a repair you have done. You may also meet the person you would report to or a senior maker.

1. Walk me through how you cut and prepare leather for a simple wallet.

Why they ask

This shows whether you understand pattern placement, grain direction, thickness and waste reduction.

How to structure your answer

A step-by-step walk-through: start with the pattern and hide, explain how you check for flaws, lay out pieces, cut and prepare edges.

Example answer

"First I check the pattern and the hide for marks or weak spots. I place the pattern pieces to follow the grain and avoid stretch areas, then trace or use a clicking press. I cut with a sharp knife or chisel, keeping the blade at a consistent angle. After cutting, I skive edges where needed and check that all pieces match the pattern before moving to stitching."

2. How do you organise your bench when you have several bespoke orders at different stages?

Why they ask

Employers want to see how you manage workflow and avoid mixing up components.

How to structure your answer

Describe your method: sorting by job, using trays or labels, batching similar tasks, and keeping tools within reach.

Example answer

"I keep each order in a separate tray with its own pattern and hardware. I batch similar tasks like cutting or edge finishing so I am not switching tools constantly. I work on one stage at a time and check off each step on a job sheet. At the end of the day I clear the bench and put tools back so the next day starts clean."

3. Tell me about a time you found a fault in a finished piece. What did you do?

Why they ask

This tests your attention to detail and honesty about quality.

How to structure your answer

STAR: situation, task, action, result.

Example answer

"I was inspecting a bag before dispatch and noticed the topstitching was slightly uneven on one side. The piece was due that afternoon. I told my supervisor straight away and we agreed to re-stitch the panel. I unpicked the seam, adjusted the machine tension, and re-stitched it. It went out on time and the customer never knew, but the quality was right."

4. A customer brings in a leather bag with a torn strap and wants it repaired in two days. What do you do?

Why they ask

This probes your judgement, customer service and repair skills.

How to structure your answer

Assess the damage, explain options, give a realistic timeframe, and describe how you would carry out the repair.

Example answer

"I would look at the tear and check if the strap can be patched or needs replacing. I would explain both options and the costs and time involved. If two days is not realistic for a full replacement, I would say so and offer a temporary fix or a later date. If they agree, I would match the leather as closely as possible, stitch or rivet the repair, and finish the edges. I would ask them to check it before they leave."

5. What are your main safety concerns when working with leather tools and machines?

Why they ask

Shows you take workshop safety seriously.

How to structure your answer

List the hazards, then the controls you use.

Example answer

"The main risks are cuts from knives and awls, and needle pricks from the sewing machine. I keep blades sharp and cut away from my body, and I use a cutting mat and a steel rule. On the machine I keep my fingers clear of the needle and use a finger guard. I also make sure the bench is tidy, cables are not trailing, and I wear safety glasses when hammering rivets or snaps. If something is unsafe, I stop and report it."

6. How do you handle a client who wants a design that you know will not wear well?

Why they ask

Tests diplomacy and technical judgement.

How to structure your answer

Listen, explain the issue, offer alternatives, and let the client decide.

Example answer

"I would ask what they like about the design so I understand the priority. Then I would explain why that choice might not last, for example a thin strap on a heavy bag, and show them a sample of a stronger option. I would offer a compromise that keeps the look but improves durability. If they still want the original, I would note it on the order and make it as well as possible, but I would not promise it will last."