Metal Fabricator interview questions

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What to expect

Interviews for metal fabricator roles usually mix a standard conversation with some kind of practical or technical check, since employers need to know you can actually run the equipment and read a drawing, not just talk about it.

- **Process:** Questions about how you approach a job from drawing to finished part, checking you understand the full workflow.
- **Technical:** Questions on specific equipment, welding processes and standards to confirm hands-on trade knowledge.
- **Safety:** Questions about managing hazards like hot work, fumes and PPE, given the physical risks in fabrication work.
- **Behavioural:** Questions about past situations, particularly around quality issues, teamwork and problem solving on the shop floor.
- **Scenario:** Judgement-based questions testing how you'd handle conflicting instructions or unexpected problems mid-job.

Expect a shop floor or office conversation covering your trade qualifications and ticket history first, then questions about specific equipment and standards you've worked to. Many employers will also ask you to read a sample drawing or complete a short practical weld test as part of the process, sometimes on the day, sometimes as a second-stage assessment.

1. Walk me through how you'd approach a new job once you're handed an engineering drawing.

Why they ask

Checks whether you have a methodical process for planning fabrication work rather than just diving in.

How to structure your answer

Walk through your process in order: reading the drawing and specifications, planning the cutting and welding sequence, checking material against tolerances, then assembly and final quality check.

Example answer

“I start by reading the drawing fully before touching any material, noting tolerances, weld symbols and finish requirements. I check the material on hand matches the spec, then plan out the cutting and welding sequence so I'm not fighting distortion later. Once I've marked and measured everything, I fabricate the parts, tack them up, and do a dimensional check before final welding and a last inspection against the drawing.”

2. What's the difference between MIG and TIG welding, and when would you choose one over the other?

Why they ask

Confirms genuine hands-on welding knowledge rather than surface familiarity with the terms.

How to structure your answer

Explain the technical distinction first, then give a practical example of when each process suits the job.

Example answer

“MIG uses a continuously fed wire electrode and is faster, so I'd use it on thicker structural steel or longer production runs where speed matters more than finish. TIG uses a tungsten electrode and gives a cleaner, more controlled weld, so I'd use it on thinner sheet metal, stainless or aluminium

where appearance and precision matter more than speed."

3. How do you manage the risks around hot work and welding fumes on a job site?

Why they ask

Fabrication involves ongoing exposure to burns, fume inhalation and fire risk, so employers want to see you take this seriously without being prompted.

How to structure your answer

Cover hazard identification, the control measures you'd use, and what you'd do if a control wasn't in place or failed.

Example answer

"Before I start hot work I check ventilation, clear flammable material from the area and confirm I've got the right PPE, including a properly rated respirator if I'm welding galvanised or coated steel. If extraction isn't working or the area isn't cleared properly, I stop and sort that out before striking an arc, rather than working around it."

4. Tell me about a time you found a defect or quality issue in your own or someone else's work.

Why they ask

Tests whether you catch problems and deal with them rather than letting them slide through.

How to structure your answer

Use STAR: situation, task, action, result.

Example answer

"On one job I was doing final checks on a batch of welded brackets and noticed a few had porosity that wasn't obvious until I looked closely. I flagged it to my supervisor straight away rather than letting them go through, reground and rewelded the affected joints, and re-inspected the whole batch to make sure I hadn't missed anything else. It added time to the job but meant nothing faulty went out the door."

5. You're partway through fabricating a component and realise the material on hand doesn't match what the drawing specifies. What do you do?

Why they ask

Tests judgement under pressure and whether you'd cut corners to keep a job moving.

How to structure your answer

Talk through the judgement call: stop and verify, who you'd escalate to, and how you'd avoid unnecessary delay without compromising the spec.

Example answer

"I'd stop work on that part straight away rather than assume it's close enough. I'd check the drawing and material certification again to confirm the mismatch, then raise it with my supervisor or the estimator so they can source the right material or approve a documented substitution. I wouldn't proceed on a guess, since a wrong-grade material can cause a structural failure down the track."

6. A supervisor gives you an instruction that seems to conflict with the drawing. How do you handle it?

Why they ask

Checks how you balance following direction with sticking to documented specifications, which matters for compliance and safety.

How to structure your answer

Describe how you'd raise the discrepancy professionally, verify against the documented spec, and resolve it without dismissing either the drawing or the supervisor outright.

Example answer

“I'd point out the conflict to my supervisor directly and pull up the drawing so we're looking at the same information. Sometimes there's a revision I haven't seen, sometimes it's a genuine mistake. Either way, I'd want that sorted and documented before I proceed, since building to the wrong spec creates problems well beyond that one job.”