

Operating Theatre Technician interview questions

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What to expect

Interviews for Operating Theatre Technician roles focus on your practical ability to prepare and maintain a sterile environment, your understanding of infection control, and how you work under pressure with a surgical team. Employers look for calmness, attention to detail and a commitment to patient safety.

- **Process questions:** These ask you to walk through a standard procedure, such as setting up a theatre or sterilising instruments, to check your technical knowledge and consistency.
- **Behavioural questions:** These explore past experiences, such as a time you noticed a safety issue, to assess your judgement and teamwork.
- **Scenario questions:** These present a hypothetical problem, like an equipment failure mid-surgery, to see how you prioritise and communicate under pressure.
- **Safety and compliance questions:** These test your knowledge of standards like AS/NZS 4187 and ACORN guidelines, and how you apply them in daily work.
- **Technical questions:** These ask about specific tools, such as electrosurgical units or ORMIS, to confirm your hands-on familiarity.

The interview typically starts with a phone screen with a recruiter or nurse manager, covering your qualifications and availability. If you progress, you will attend a face-to-face interview with a panel that may include a theatre nurse manager, a senior technician and sometimes a surgeon. This is often followed by a practical assessment in a simulated theatre, where you demonstrate setting up a sterile field or handling instruments. The process may take one to two weeks.

1. Walk me through how you prepare an operating theatre for a scheduled procedure.

Why they ask

To assess your methodical approach and knowledge of sterile technique.

How to structure your answer

A walk-through structure: start with checking the theatre schedule and patient requirements, then list the steps in order, from cleaning and setting up equipment to confirming instruments and final safety checks. End with how you verify everything is ready.

Example answer

"I start by checking the theatre list to confirm the procedure, surgeon preferences and any special equipment needed. Then I clean the theatre and set up the sterile field, making sure the instrument trays are complete and the electrosurgical unit is tested. I check that patient monitoring systems are working and that the anaesthetic machine has been checked by the anaesthetist. I also confirm stock levels of consumables like swabs and sutures. Finally, I do a final walkthrough to ensure everything is in place before the patient arrives, and I communicate with the team if anything is missing."

2. Tell me about a time you noticed a potential safety issue in the theatre. What did you do?

Why they ask

To see how you handle safety concerns and whether you speak up.

How to structure your answer

STAR: Situation, Task, Action, Result. Describe the context, what you noticed, the action you took, and the outcome.

Example answer

"In a previous role, I noticed a small tear in a sterile pack during setup. It was a situation where the integrity of the sterile field was compromised. My task was to ensure patient safety while keeping the theatre on schedule. I immediately removed the pack, informed the nurse in charge and replaced it with a new one from a different batch. I also documented the issue so it could be followed up with the supplier. As a result, the procedure went ahead safely with no delay, and the incident was used to reinforce our checking process."

3. You are assisting in a surgery when the electrosurgical unit malfunctions. What do you do?

Why they ask

To test your problem-solving and ability to stay calm under pressure.

How to structure your answer

A judgement-under-pressure structure: acknowledge the issue, prioritise patient safety, communicate clearly, and take the correct next step. Then explain how you would prevent it happening again.

Example answer

"I would immediately inform the surgeon and the nurse in charge, then check if there is a backup unit available. If not, I would help switch to an alternative method as directed by the surgeon. Throughout, I would stay calm and follow the team's lead, ensuring the patient remains stable. After the procedure, I would report the fault, tag the unit for repair and check that all other units are functioning. I would also suggest a pre-check protocol to catch faults earlier."

4. How do you ensure you are compliant with AS/NZS 4187 and ACORN standards in your daily work?

Why they ask

To confirm you know the Australian standards and apply them consistently.

How to structure your answer

A straightforward explanation: describe the standards, then give examples of how you follow them, such as through sterilisation cycles, documentation and hand hygiene.

Example answer

"I follow AS/NZS 4187 for reprocessing reusable medical devices, which means I check that autoclave cycles are validated, that instruments are correctly wrapped and that sterilisation indicators are logged. For ACORN standards, I apply the principles of aseptic technique, hand hygiene and correct surgical attire. In practice, I complete mandatory training, keep up with updates and audit my own work. For example, I always verify sterilisation batch numbers and document them, so there is a clear traceability record."

5. What experience do you have with ORMIS or SurgiNet, and how do you use them?

Why they ask

To gauge your familiarity with theatre management systems.

How to structure your answer

A skills description: state your experience level, then explain specific tasks you perform, such as scheduling, stock management or patient tracking.

Example answer

"I have used ORMIS for over two years to manage theatre schedules and track instrument usage. I update case details, check stock levels and record any equipment issues. I also use SurgiNet to review patient information and confirm procedure requirements. I am comfortable entering data accurately and using the system to communicate with the team. I have trained new staff on basic

functions and helped troubleshoot when the system was slow.”

**6. Describe a time you worked with a difficult colleague during a procedure.
How did you handle it?**

Why they ask

To assess your interpersonal skills and professionalism in a high-stakes environment.

How to structure your answer

STAR: Situation, Task, Action, Result, focusing on communication and resolution.

Example answer

“During a complex surgery, a colleague was visibly stressed and snapped at me when I asked for an instrument. I understood the pressure, so I stayed calm and responded politely. My task was to keep the procedure moving without escalating tension. I acknowledged their stress quietly, repeated my request clearly and offered to get the instrument myself. After the case, I checked in with them privately to see if they were okay. The surgery finished without further issues, and we maintained a respectful working relationship.”