

Piano Tuner interview questions

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What to expect

Piano tuning interviews usually blend a practical assessment with a conversation about your experience, client manner and how you handle different instruments and venues. Employers want to see that you can tune reliably by ear and with electronic aids, diagnose mechanical issues and communicate clearly with owners and music directors.

- **Practical assessment:** You may be asked to tune a piano on site or in a workshop, demonstrating pitch accuracy, stability and safe use of a tuning lever.
- **Technical diagnosis:** Questions or scenarios about action regulation, voicing, string replacement, pedal repairs and humidity-related problems.
- **Client-facing and communication:** How you explain maintenance needs, advise on humidity control and handle scheduling with schools, churches or private owners.
- **Behavioural:** Past examples of working independently, managing a busy schedule and dealing with a difficult tuning or an unhappy client.
- **Business and self-employment:** For contract roles, how you quote jobs, keep records, manage travel between locations and maintain your own tools and continuing development.

Typically a first phone or video conversation to discuss your background and availability, followed by an in-person meeting where you tune a piano and walk through a diagnosis. Some employers ask you to bring your own tuning lever and electronic tuning device. You may also meet a music director or studio manager. The session usually ends with questions about your rates, travel radius and how you handle after-hours concert work.

1. Walk us through how you tune a piano that has not been serviced for several years.

Why they ask

Tests your process for pitch raises, stability and understanding of instrument condition.

How to structure your answer

A process walk-through: start with inspection, then pitch assessment, then pitch raise if needed, fine tuning, and a check of unisons and stability. Finish with advice to the client.

Example answer

"First I inspect the piano for obvious damage, rust or loose pins. I check the current pitch with a tuning fork or an app like TuneLab and compare it to A440. If it is significantly flat, I explain to the client that a pitch raise is needed and that the piano may drift again quickly. I do a rough pitch raise across the whole instrument, then a fine tuning, working from the middle outward. I set the pins carefully and test unisons and octaves by ear. After tuning I play a few chords and check that the action feels even. I leave the client with advice on humidity and suggest a follow-up tuning in a few months."

2. Tell me about a time you had to repair a piano under time pressure, for example before a performance.

Why they ask

Assesses problem solving, composure and practical repair skills.

How to structure your answer

STAR: situation, task, action, result.

Example answer

"A school called me the day before their annual concert because a pedal had stopped working on their main grand. I arrived that afternoon, found a broken pedal lyre rod and a worn bushing. I did not have the exact replacement part, so I fabricated a temporary fix using a similar rod and adjusted the trapwork so the sustain pedal would function reliably for the performance. I also tuned the piano while I was there. The concert went ahead without issues, and I returned the following week to fit the proper part. The school now books me for a pre-concert check every year."

3. How do you explain to a client that their piano needs significant work, such as a full action regulation, when they are not sure they want to spend the money?

Why they ask

Tests client communication, selling and negotiation skills and ethical approach.

How to structure your answer

A client-facing judgement structure: acknowledge the client's position, explain the benefit in plain terms, offer options, and let them decide.

Example answer

"I start by asking what they use the piano for and what they have noticed about the touch or tone. If they are a casual player, I explain that regulation can make the piano easier to play and prevent more costly repairs later. I give them a clear picture of what is involved and how long it will take. I offer to do the work in stages if that suits their budget. I never pressure them. If they decide to wait, I note the issues on their service record and suggest we revisit it at the next tuning."

4. What is your approach to humidity control for pianos in Australian climates?

Why they ask

Tests technical knowledge specific to local conditions and client advice.

How to structure your answer

A technical explanation structure: identify the problem, describe the effect on the instrument, then outline practical solutions.

Example answer

"Australian climates vary a lot, so I ask clients about the room the piano lives in. In humid coastal areas, high moisture can swell the soundboard and make tuning unstable, so I recommend a dehumidifier or a Dampp-Chaser system. In dry inland areas, low humidity can cause cracks and loose tuning pins, so a room humidifier or a dampp-chaser with a humidifier bar can help. I also advise keeping the piano away from direct sun, heaters and open windows. I check the tuning stability at each visit and adjust my advice based on what I see."

5. Describe how you manage your schedule when you have multiple clients across a wide area.

Why they ask

Assesses time management, operations and self-employment skills.

How to structure your answer

A practical planning structure: talk through how you group jobs, plan routes, allow for travel and handle cancellations.

Example answer

"I plan my week by grouping clients by suburb or region. I allow extra time for travel and for jobs that might need unexpected repairs. I confirm appointments the day before by text or email. If a cancellation comes in, I check my list for someone nearby who might want an earlier slot. I keep a simple record of each piano's history and next service date. For concert work, I block out the day and

arrive early so I am not rushed. This approach keeps my travel efficient and my clients informed."

6. Why do you want to work as a piano tuner, and how do you keep your skills current?

Why they ask

Tests motivation, commitment and professional development.

How to structure your answer

A reflective answer: personal motivation, then concrete steps for learning and staying connected.

Example answer

"I have always been drawn to the mix of craft and music in piano tuning. I enjoy the puzzle of making an instrument sound and feel right for the person playing it. To keep my skills current, I am a member of the Australasian Piano Tuners and Technicians Association and I attend their workshops when I can. I also practise aural tuning regularly alongside my electronic tuning devices, and I read technical bulletins about new tools and techniques. I ask experienced tuners for advice when I encounter an unusual piano. I want to keep improving so I can handle any instrument confidently."