

Pilot interview questions

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What to expect

Pilot interviews combine technical knowledge checks with behavioural and scenario-based questions, often alongside a simulator assessment and review of licences, medical certification and flight hours. Interviewers are also weighing how quickly a candidate can be endorsed on type and integrated into the roster.

- **Process:** Walking through standard procedures such as pre-flight inspections or flight planning, checked against CASA and operator requirements.
- **Behavioural:** Past examples of crew coordination, decision making and handling pressure, usually structured around a specific incident.
- **Scenario:** Hypothetical in-flight situations, such as conflicting ATC instructions or a developing technical fault, used to assess judgement in real time.
- **Technical:** Questions on aircraft systems, regulations, fuel and weight calculations, and navigation equipment relevant to the aircraft type.
- **Safety and compliance:** How the candidate maintains currency, follows CASA regulations and manages risk in day-to-day operations.

Most pilot interviews run as a panel with a check captain and an operations or HR representative, opening with licence and medical verification, moving through technical and scenario questions, and closing with a discussion of rostering, base location and availability. A simulator or technical assessment is often scheduled separately, either before or after the panel interview.

1. Walk me through your pre-flight inspection process from arriving at the aircraft to being ready for pushback.

Why they ask

Confirms the candidate follows a thorough, methodical process rather than skipping steps under time pressure.

How to structure your answer

Sequential walk-through: describe each stage in order, noting what you check, what you'd do if something's wrong, and how you sign off before departure.

Example answer

"I start with the aircraft documentation, checking maintenance release and defect history, then move to the external walkaround following the checklist sequence, looking at control surfaces, tyres, engines and any visible damage. Inside, I check the cockpit systems, avionics and emergency equipment against the checklist, then brief the cabin crew on any relevant items before confirming with dispatch that fuel, weight and balance figures match the flight plan. If I find a discrepancy at any point, I stop and raise it with engineering before proceeding."

2. Tell me about a time you had to make a quick decision in response to a technical malfunction or unexpected weather.

Why they ask

Tests real-world judgement under pressure and whether the candidate follows procedure rather than improvising unsafely.

How to structure your answer

STAR: set the situation and the specific problem, explain the action you took and why, and finish with the outcome and what you'd repeat or change.

Example answer

"On descent into a regional airport, I got an unexpected warning light for a hydraulic system. I ran the relevant checklist, confirmed the fault with the co-pilot, and decided to divert to the nearest suitable airport with full emergency services on standby rather than continue to the original destination. We landed without incident and engineering found a faulty sensor. The outcome reinforced for me that following the checklist and erring on the side of caution, even when it causes a delay, is always the right call."

3. You're at cruise altitude and air traffic control gives you an instruction that conflicts with a weather cell you can see ahead on radar. How do you handle it?

Why they ask

Assesses judgement under pressure, communication with ATC and the ability to prioritise safety over instruction compliance when necessary.

How to structure your answer

Judgement under pressure: state your immediate priority, the options you'd weigh, and how you'd communicate your decision back to ATC and your crew.

Example answer

"My first priority is the safety of the aircraft, so if the ATC instruction would take us into the weather cell, I'd advise ATC directly that I'm unable to comply due to weather and request an alternate heading or altitude. While waiting for a response, I'd brief my co-pilot on the plan and use the aircraft's weather radar to identify the safest deviation. I'd rather negotiate with ATC in real time than accept an instruction that compromises safety."

4. How do you manage communication and coordination with cabin crew during an in-flight emergency?

Why they ask

Checks understanding of crew resource management and the ability to lead under stress without excluding the rest of the team.

How to structure your answer

STAR: describe a specific situation, the coordination steps you took, and the result for passengers and crew.

Example answer

"During a cabin pressurisation issue, I initiated the emergency descent and immediately used the PA to give cabin crew clear, specific instructions on securing the cabin and preparing passengers. I kept them updated at each stage of the descent so they could manage passenger reactions without needing to come to the flight deck. Afterwards, we debriefed as a full crew, which helped confirm everyone understood the sequence of events the same way."

5. What factors do you weigh up when planning a flight route, and how do you adjust that plan if conditions change?

Why they ask

Tests technical knowledge of flight planning fundamentals, including fuel, weight and airspace constraints.

How to structure your answer

Technical explanation: name the key variables, explain how they interact, and give an example of adjusting the plan mid-process.

Example answer

"I look at forecast weather along the route and at the destination and alternates, current NOTAMs and airspace restrictions, and fuel requirements based on payload and expected winds. If a front is tracking toward the destination, I'll build in extra holding fuel or nominate a different alternate before departure rather than relying on in-flight replanning. Once airborne, I keep monitoring weather updates and fuel burn against the plan so any adjustment is made early, not as a last resort."

6. How do you stay current with CASA regulations and make sure your day-to-day flying stays compliant?

Why they ask

Confirms the candidate treats regulatory currency and compliance as an ongoing responsibility, not a box-ticking exercise.

How to structure your answer

Process explanation: describe your routine for staying current, then give a concrete example of catching or correcting a compliance issue.

Example answer

"I keep a running check of my licence, medical and type rating currency well ahead of expiry dates, and I read CASA advisory circulars and operator bulletins as they're issued rather than waiting for recurrent training. On one occasion I noticed a change to an approach procedure hadn't yet been updated in the crew briefing pack, so I flagged it with operations before the next rostered flight using that route. Staying ahead of these changes is part of the job, not something to catch up on later."