

Plasterer interview questions

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What to expect

Plastering interviews are usually run by a site supervisor, builder or business owner and focus on practical competence more than formal credentials. Expect questions that test whether you actually know how to read a job, prepare properly and finish to code, alongside safety and reliability checks given the physical demands and multi-trade coordination involved.

- **Technical/process:** Questions about how you prepare substrates, mix materials, and achieve specific finishes, testing real trade knowledge rather than textbook answers.
- **Safety:** Questions on WHS practices, dust and manual handling risks, and how you keep a site compliant and hazard-free.
- **Scenario/judgement:** Hypothetical situations involving defects, tight deadlines or conflicting instructions from a builder or client, testing decision-making on the spot.
- **Behavioural:** Past-experience questions about teamwork, handling mistakes, and working reliably across trade-sequenced sites.
- **Client-facing:** Questions about explaining delays or defects to a client or builder without damaging the relationship or the job's reputation.

Most plastering interviews start with a short chat about your ticket, licensing and recent jobs, move into technical and scenario questions to check practical judgement, and often finish with logistics: availability, transport, tools you own, and sometimes a request to view photos of past work or attend a short site visit or trade test.

1. Walk me through how you'd prepare a ceiling substrate before applying a skim coat.

Why they ask

This checks whether you understand that finish quality starts well before the trowel touches the wall, which is a common gap in less experienced plasterers.

How to structure your answer

Process walk-through: describe the steps in order (inspect, clean, dampen, prime), explaining why each step matters and what happens if it's skipped.

Example answer

"I start by checking the surface for dust, grease or loose material and clean it off properly. If it's a porous or previously painted surface, I'll dampen or prime it so the plaster doesn't dry out too fast and crack. I also check for any structural issues, like movement in the plasterboard or joints that need extra reinforcement, before I even mix my first batch. Skipping this step is usually where cracking and adhesion problems come from later."

2. How do you manage dust and manual handling risks on a plastering job?

Why they ask

Plastering involves repetitive lifting, overhead work and fine dust exposure, so employers want to see you take WHS seriously without being told.

How to structure your answer

Direct answer covering hazard, control measure and why it matters, referencing standard site practice.

Example answer

"Dust is probably the biggest day-to-day risk, so I use dust extraction on sanding equipment and wear a properly fitted respirator, not just a disposable mask. For manual handling, I use trolleys for plasterboard sheets where I can and get a second person for anything awkward or overhead rather than risking a back injury. I also make sure the work area is clear of trip hazards before I start mixing or spraying."

3. Tell me about a time you had to fix a finish that didn't meet the required standard.

Why they ask

This tests accountability and technical problem-solving under real conditions, not just theoretical knowledge.

How to structure your answer

STAR: situation, task, action, result.

Example answer

"On one job, a ceiling I'd skimmed showed joint lines once the paint went on under raking light. The builder flagged it before handover. I went back, sanded back the affected areas, re-skimmed with a wider feather edge and let it cure properly before re-sanding. It passed the follow-up inspection and the builder didn't raise it again on later jobs we did together. It taught me to check finishes under different lighting before calling a job done."

4. A builder wants you to skip a drying time to keep the schedule on track. What do you do?

Why they ask

This scenario checks judgement under pressure, since skipping proper curing time is a common shortcut that causes defects later.

How to structure your answer

Scenario/judgement: state the immediate risk, the decision you'd make, and how you'd communicate it.

Example answer

"I'd explain to the builder that rushing the drying time risks cracking or bond failure, which would mean redoing the work later and losing more time overall. I'd look at whether there's another part of the job I can move onto in the meantime so the schedule isn't sitting idle, and flag a realistic timeline so it's clear I'm not just being difficult. Most builders will accept that once they understand the rework risk."

5. How do you read a set of plans to work out what finish and materials a job requires?

Why they ask

Reading plans and specifications correctly avoids costly material and finish mismatches, and is listed as a core task for this role.

How to structure your answer

Process walk-through: explain what you check first, second, and how you confirm anything unclear.

Example answer

"I check the specification notes for the finish type, whether it's a set, skim or texture finish, and any fire or acoustic rating requirements for the linings. I look at the wall and ceiling schedules to confirm plasterboard thickness and stud spacing, and cross-check any detail drawings for cornice or bulkhead junctions. If anything's ambiguous, I'll raise it with the site supervisor before ordering material rather than guessing."

6. How would you explain a delay or defect to a client without it turning into a dispute?

Why they ask

Plasterers often deal directly with builders or homeowners, and this checks communication skill alongside trade competence.

How to structure your answer

Client-facing: explain your approach to tone, transparency and next steps.

Example answer

"I'd be upfront early rather than waiting for them to notice. I'd explain plainly what happened, why it happened, and what I'm doing to fix it, without overloading them with technical detail they don't need. Most people react fine to a straight answer and a clear plan, it's usually silence or excuses that turn a small issue into a dispute."