

Police Officer interview questions

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What to expect

Police recruitment interviews sit alongside fitness, medical and psychological testing, so the interview itself focuses on judgement, integrity and how a candidate behaves under pressure rather than technical policing knowledge, which is taught at the academy. Panels usually include a recruiting sergeant or serving officer and look for consistency between a candidate's stated values and their described actions.

- **Behavioural:** Past-experience questions probing conflict resolution, teamwork and handling stress, answered using a structured example from work or life.
- **Scenario/judgement:** Hypothetical incidents (domestic disturbance, hostile crowd, ambiguous use-of-force situation) testing decision-making and de-escalation instincts before formal training.
- **Process:** Questions on how a candidate would approach evidence handling, report writing or scene management, testing methodical thinking rather than legal detail.
- **Safety:** Risk assessment questions around traffic stops, unknown premises or armed offenders, checking situational awareness.
- **Community/stakeholder:** Questions on engaging with diverse or distressed members of the public, since general duties work is largely public-facing.

Interviews typically open with background and motivation questions, move into behavioural and scenario questions that make up the bulk of the session, and close with a chance for the candidate to ask about rostering, specialist units or academy training.

1. Tell me about a time you had to stay calm while someone was aggressive or distressed with you.

Why they ask

General duties work involves constant contact with people in crisis, so panels want evidence of composure before they invest in academy training.

How to structure your answer

Use STAR: describe the situation and who was involved, the specific task or risk you faced, the action you took to de-escalate, and the result including what you'd keep doing next time.

Example answer

"In my previous customer-facing role a client became aggressive when a refund was declined. I kept my voice low and steady, moved the conversation away from other customers, and focused on what I could actually do rather than repeating the policy. He calmed down once he felt heard, and we resolved it without it escalating further. It taught me that tone and body language often matter more than the words themselves, which I think applies directly to attending a heated domestic call."

2. You're called to a domestic disturbance and on arrival one party is calm and the other is agitated and won't let you inside. What do you do?

Why they ask

This tests immediate risk assessment and decision-making under ambiguity, which is central to general duties policing and not something the academy can fully simulate.

How to structure your answer

Walk through your judgement step by step: what you'd assess first for safety, what information you'd try to gather, and how you'd decide your next move, acknowledging uncertainty rather than giving a falsely confident single answer.

Example answer

"First I'd assess my own safety and call for backup if the agitation suggests risk, without assuming guilt on either side. I'd try to separate the two parties verbally, get a clear view of the property, and ask direct but calm questions to understand what's happened. If access is refused and I have reasonable grounds to believe someone inside is at risk, I'd explain my legal basis for entry clearly before acting, rather than escalating physically straight away."

3. Walk me through how you'd manage a crime scene from arrival to handover for evidence collection.

Why they ask

Report accuracy and evidence integrity directly affect prosecution outcomes, so the panel checks for methodical thinking even before formal evidence law training.

How to structure your answer

Give a clear sequence: first actions on arrival, how you'd preserve the scene, what you'd record and when, and how you'd hand over to specialist units or detectives.

Example answer

"On arrival I'd secure the scene first, keeping people and vehicles away from anything that could be evidence, and note the time and initial conditions before anything changes. I'd identify witnesses early while details are fresh and keep my own observations separate from what others tell me. Everything goes into contemporaneous notes, and once specialist units arrive I'd brief them clearly on what's been touched or moved so the chain of custody stays intact."

4. How would you assess risk during a routine traffic stop at night on a quiet road?

Why they ask

Traffic stops are a common general duties task with real safety exposure, so this checks situational awareness rather than procedure recall.

How to structure your answer

Describe your risk assessment in order: what you'd check before approaching, positioning and lighting considerations, and what would make you change your approach.

Example answer

"Before approaching I'd run the plates if possible, position my vehicle to protect myself from passing traffic, and use my lights to see into the car clearly. I'd watch the occupants' hands and behaviour as I approach rather than focusing only on the conversation. If anything felt off, like sudden movement or a mismatch between the driver's story and the vehicle details, I'd slow things down and call for backup rather than push the interaction forward alone."

5. Describe a time you had to explain a decision to someone who disagreed with it, such as issuing a fine or enforcing a rule.

Why they ask

Community trust depends on officers being able to justify decisions clearly and fairly, so this probes communication under pushback.

How to structure your answer

STAR again, but focus the result on whether the relationship or the person's understanding improved, not just whether you won the argument.

Example answer

"I once had to tell a customer their complaint didn't meet our policy for a refund. They were frustrated and felt unheard, so I walked them through exactly why the decision was made and what options were still available to them. They still weren't happy with the outcome but told me afterwards they

appreciated the honesty. I think that's the same balance needed when enforcing something like a traffic infringement: people don't need to agree, but they should feel it was explained fairly."

6. Why do you want to join policing specifically, rather than another emergency service or public safety role?

Why they ask

Panels want candidates who understand the specific demands of policing, including shift work, court obligations and enforcement duties, rather than a general interest in helping people.

How to structure your answer

Keep this concise and personal: state your genuine reason, connect it to one specific aspect of the job description, and avoid generic statements about wanting to help the community.

Example answer

"I've thought about firefighting and ambulance work too, but what draws me to policing specifically is the investigative side, working out what actually happened at a scene and making sure it's documented properly for court. I like that the job combines immediate response with longer follow-through on cases, and I'm realistic about the shift work and the parts of the role that involve enforcement rather than just assistance."