

Rafting Guide interview questions

careertips.com.au: common questions and what they're really testing

What to expect

Rafting Guide interviews blend practical safety checks with questions about how you handle clients and changing river conditions. Employers want to see that you can think on your feet and keep calm when something goes wrong.

- **Process questions:** These test whether you understand the steps in a standard trip, from briefing to debrief.
- **Behavioural questions:** They ask for real examples of past guiding, teamwork or customer service.
- **Scenario questions:** You will be given a what-if situation on the river and asked how you would respond.
- **Technical questions:** These probe your knowledge of rapids, equipment and rescue techniques.
- **Safety and compliance questions:** Expect questions about WHS, risk assessments and incident reporting.

Typically a short phone screen, then a face-to-face or on-water interview with a senior guide or operations manager. You might be asked to demonstrate a safety briefing or paddle technique. Some operators run a practical assessment day.

1. Walk me through how you prepare for a day's rafting trip, from arrival at the shed to launching the rafts.

Why they ask

This shows whether you have a systematic approach to safety and equipment.

How to structure your answer

Use a chronological walk-through: start with checking water levels and weather, then equipment inspection, client check-in and briefing, and finally the launch sequence.

Example answer

"First thing, I check the river gauge and weather forecast to confirm the day's plan is still suitable. Then I inspect each raft, PFD, helmet and paddle, noting anything that needs repair. When clients arrive, I fit their gear, run a safety briefing covering paddling commands, what to do if they fall in, and how to help a swimmer. Only then do we carry the rafts to the put-in and launch."

2. Tell me about a time you had to manage a difficult client on the river.

Why they ask

Guiding is customer-facing, and you need to balance enjoyment with safety.

How to structure your answer

STAR: situation, task, action, result. Focus on how you kept the group safe and the client calm.

Example answer

"On a family trip, a teenager kept standing up in the raft despite repeated warnings. I pulled into an eddy, calmly explained the risk of falling into cold water and asked him to sit low. I paired him with a stronger paddler and gave him a specific job, calling out hazards. He stayed seated for the rest of the trip and even helped spot rocks. At the end, his parents thanked me for handling it without ruining the day."

3. You are mid-rapid when a raft ahead of you flips. What do you do?

Why they ask

This tests your emergency response and whether you can prioritise actions under pressure.

How to structure your answer

Use a judgement-under-pressure structure: immediate safety, then rescue, then communication.

Example answer

"I would shout a warning to my own crew and pull into the nearest eddy if safe. My priority is to account for all swimmers, so I would count heads and throw a throw bag to anyone drifting. If someone is trapped, I would use my safety kayak or reach with a paddle. Once everyone is out of the main flow, I would check for injuries, signal other guides, and decide whether to continue or evacuate."

4. How do you read a rapid before running it?**Why they ask**

It shows you can assess risk and choose a safe line.

How to structure your answer

Explain the visual cues and decision-making process step by step.

Example answer

"I stop above the rapid and look for the tongue, which shows the main flow. I check for holes, rocks, and eddies where I could stop. I consider the water level because a rapid changes character with flow. I also think about my group's ability and whether the line is within their skill. If I am unsure, I eddy out and scout from shore."

5. What records do you keep after an incident on the water?**Why they ask**

Operators need to meet WHS and incident reporting requirements.

How to structure your answer

List the key documents and the order you complete them.

Example answer

"As soon as practical, I write an incident report describing what happened, who was involved, the time, location and actions taken. I record any injuries and first aid given, and note whether equipment was damaged. I notify the operations manager and file the report according to the company's WHS system. If a client needs medical follow-up, I make sure that is documented too."

6. How do you adapt your briefing for a group that includes nervous first-timers and confident paddlers?**Why they ask**

Guides need to reassure beginners without boring experienced clients.

How to structure your answer

Describe how you segment the group and use tone and language.

Example answer

"I start with the basics for everyone: where to sit, how to hold the paddle, and the three commands we will use. Then I give the confident paddlers a specific role, like leading a paddle or watching for hazards, so they stay engaged. For nervous clients, I use a calm tone and demonstrate that falling in is safe if they follow the drill. I also pair people so no one feels singled out."