

Usher interview questions

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What to expect

Usher interviews are practical and short. Employers are testing whether you are reliable across evenings and weekends, whether you can stay polite in a crowded foyer, and whether you will actually keep exits clear when it matters.

- **Process and venue procedure:** How you would run a door, seat latecomers or hand over to the next shift, asked to check you have a repeatable method rather than a vague attitude.
- **Behavioural:** Past examples of handling difficult patrons, working in a team and turning up reliably for casual shifts.
- **Scenario and judgement:** Short pressure situations such as a patron in the wrong seat, a blocked aisle or a scanner failure, to see how you decide when to act and when to escalate.
- **Technical and systems:** Questions about ticketing apps, handheld scanners, two-way radios and reading a seating plan.
- **Safety and emergency:** Exits, evacuation roles and incident reporting, often tied to the venue's own procedures.
- **Client-facing and accessibility:** How you treat patrons with mobility needs, companion cards or language barriers, since this is a public-facing role every shift.

Expect a short phone or online screening first, mostly about availability and right to work, then a face-to-face or small group interview at the venue with a front of house supervisor or duty manager. The second stage often includes a walk through the foyer and auditorium, a look at the ticket scanners and radios, and a few scenario questions asked on the spot. Some venues run a paid or unpaid trial shift instead of a second interview.

1. Walk me through how you would run a busy door from the moment it opens to the start of the show.

Why they ask

This checks whether you have an actual method for queue flow, ticket exceptions and latecomers, not just a friendly manner.

How to structure your answer

A process walk-through. Set the scene briefly, then step through it in order: before doors, at doors, just before the start, and after the start. Finish with how you would communicate with the rest of the team.

Example answer

"Before doors I would check the scanner is charged and paired, collect a radio on the right channel, and get the seating plan and any accessibility notes from the supervisor. At doors I keep two lines moving, one for prepaid tickets and one for people who need help, and I greet each patron while the scan is happening rather than after it. If a ticket will not scan, I ask them to step to the side so the line keeps moving, check the booking reference manually, and hand them to another usher to seat. In the last few minutes before the start I watch for latecomers and hold them at the back until a gap in the aisle, and I radio the supervisor if a queue is still building. After the start, I stay at the door for late seating and keep the foyer tidy so nothing blocks the exits."

2. Tell me about a time you dealt with an angry or upset customer.

Why they ask

Emotional control is the core of the job. They want a real example, not a description of your personality.

How to structure your answer

STAR. Keep the situation and task to two sentences, spend most of the answer on your actions and exactly what you said and did, then give a clear result and what you took from it.

Example answer

"At a cinema I worked at, a family arrived for a session that had already started and found other people sitting in their seats. It was a full house and the family was upset and getting loud in the aisle. My task was to sort the seating without disrupting the rest of the audience. I moved them out of the aisle first and spoke quietly, apologised for the mix-up, and checked their booking on the scanner. The other group had misread their row, so I reseated that group two rows back and put the family in their correct seats. It took about three minutes and the film continued without a stoppage. What I took from it is that people usually calm down once they can see you are actually fixing it, so I lead with the fix rather than the explanation."

3. A patron refuses to move out of the aisle and the show is about to start. What do you do?

Why they ask

Aisles are a safety matter, not a seating preference. This tests whether you hold the line politely and know when to escalate.

How to structure your answer

Judgement under pressure. Give your immediate action, your communication approach, your escalation trigger, and what you would record afterwards.

Example answer

"First I would squat down to their eye level rather than standing over them, because that changes the tone straight away. I would explain once, plainly, that the aisle has to stay clear for safety and that I can find them a proper seat nearby. If they move, I thank them and walk them to the seat. If they refuse, I do not argue and I do not touch them. I radio or signal the duty manager to come over, stay with the patron until they arrive so nothing escalates, and let the manager take the decision. Afterwards I would note the time, the seat, what was said and who attended, so the venue has a record if the patron complains later."

4. What would you do if a ticket would not scan at the door?

Why they ask

Scanner failures happen at almost every event. They are testing your troubleshooting order and whether you protect the queue.

How to structure your answer

Troubleshooting in sequence: isolate the problem, try the simplest fix, protect the line, then fall back to a manual check and escalate if needed.

Example answer

"I would move the patron to the side of the door so the queue keeps flowing, because a stuck line at a sold-out show is a safety issue. Then I would check the obvious things: is the barcode smudged, is the screen brightness up, is the patron on the wrong date or session. I would try the handheld scanner if the app is playing up, and if neither reads it, I would look the booking up manually by name or reference on the venue system. If the booking genuinely is not there, that becomes the supervisor's call, so I would radio them, keep the patron informed about what is happening, and offer them a seat in the foyer while it is sorted rather than leaving them standing at the door."

5. What does keeping an exit clear mean in practice during a performance?

Why they ask

Exits are the part of the job with real consequences. Employers want to hear that you understand the reason, not just the instruction.

How to structure your answer

Safety knowledge with steps. State the principle, then give the practical checks you would do before, during and after a session.

Example answer

"It means anyone in that row could get out in the dark without climbing over anything. In practice, before doors I check the exit doors open freely, the aisle is clear of signage and cleaning equipment, and the step lighting is working. During the show I walk the aisles periodically and ask patrons to move bags, drinks or legs out of the walkway, which is usually a friendly one-line request. If I see something I cannot fix, like a blocked fire door, I radio it immediately rather than waiting for the interval. Afterwards I check the exit path again during the clear-out, because that is when bags and coats end up on the floor. I also make sure I know my own role in an evacuation before the doors open, not during one."

6. A patron using a wheelchair arrives with tickets in a section that has no lift access. How do you handle it?

Why they ask

Accessibility comes up in almost every venue. They are checking that you solve the problem for the patron rather than quoting the ticket back at them.

How to structure your answer

Client-facing problem solving. Acknowledge the patron's position, find what is actually available, act within your authority, and escalate what you cannot decide.

Example answer

"I would apologise for the situation and be honest that the section they booked is not accessible, rather than letting them find out at the stairs. Then I would take them to the accessible seating area if there are spaces, and check with the supervisor about swapping the tickets, since I cannot make that call on my own. If the show is full, I would ask the supervisor whether there is standing space with a clear view or seats that can be moved, and I would stay with the patron while that is sorted so they are not left waiting in the foyer on their own. Afterwards I would mention the booking issue to the supervisor so the same mistake is less likely to reach the door next time."