

INTERVIEW GUIDE

3-Step Interview Guide for Masonry & Concrete

A practical framework for interviewing masonry and concrete candidates — technical fit, motivational fit, and culture fit, with real questions for each of the 10 roles we recruit for.

One framework, ten roles, and a scorecard you can actually compare across candidates.

This guide gives you a consistent 3-step interview framework — technical fit, motivational fit, culture fit — plus role-specific questions for the ten positions commercial masonry and concrete contractors recruit for most. Use the general framework for every candidate, then pull the questions for their specific role from the reference section.

Score each step 1-5 as you go. A candidate who's strong on technical fit but weak on culture fit is a different hiring decision than one who's the reverse — the scorecard makes that visible instead of relying on a gut "good interview" feeling.

3-STEP FRAMEWORK

Technical fit. Motivational fit. Culture fit. In that order.

Most masonry and concrete interviews go straight to "tell me about your experience" and never get specific enough to actually verify anything. This guide gives you three structured steps, each with real questions, so you leave the interview with actual signal — not just a good feeling.

Step 1 — Technical fit: ask about specific project types and how they handle the conditions that expose inexperience.

Step 2 — Motivational fit: understand why they're moving and how they handle a job that doesn't go to plan.

Step 3 — Culture fit: crew dynamics and how they think about quality and safety on-site.

STEP 1

Technical fit — ask about project types, not years.

Flatwork, vertical brick, block, and restoration all draw on different muscle memory. A candidate with "10 years of masonry experience" could be strong in one of these and have almost no real time in another — years alone won't tell you which.

Ask in the room:

- "Walk me through the last three project types you worked — flatwork, vertical brick, block, restoration?"
- "For finishers: how do you handle a pour when the weather's outside the ideal range — too hot, too cold, or too wet?"
- "For restoration/tuckpointing candidates: describe how you matched mortar on a past project." (Listen for testing and adjusting the mix — not just "I made it look the same.")
- "What's the largest or most complex job you've run start to finish?"
- "What's your process for checking your own work before a foreman or inspector does?"

STEP 2

Motivational fit — why now, and how do they handle friction.

- "What made you start looking?" (Vague answers here are a bigger flag than an honest "the pay wasn't matching the work.")
- "Do you prefer general commercial work, restoration/specialty work, or a mix — and why?"
- "Tell me about a time a pour or a job didn't go the way you planned. What did you do?"
- "What does a bad day on this job look like to you, and what do you do about it?"

Candidates who can talk specifically about how they handle weather delays, a schedule slip, or a difficult foreman tend to be far more reliable hires than candidates who only talk in generalities about "hard work."

STEP 3

Culture fit — crew dynamics and quality mindset.

- "Tell me about a time you caught a quality issue before it became a bigger problem. What did you do?"
- "How do you handle it when a crewmate isn't pulling their weight?"
- "What's your take on double-checking mix and layout before you start, even when you're behind schedule?"
- "How do you like to receive feedback from a foreman or inspector?"

Red flags checklist

- Can't name specific project types when pressed — only generic "masonry" or "concrete work"
- No real answer for how they handle bad-weather pours or restoration mortar-matching, if the role calls for it
- Blames every past employer for every problem, with no self-reflection
- Dismisses quality-check or safety questions as "not a big deal"

Score every candidate on the same four dimensions.

DIMENSION	1-2	3	4-5
Technical skill	Vague on project types, no real detail on complex jobs	Confirms basics, vague on harder scenarios	Specific on project type, weather/mortar-matching answers, and largest job run
Stability	Frequent short stints, vague reasons	Reasonable tenure, plausible reasons	Strong tenure or clear, specific reason for each move
Culture fit	Dismisses quality checks, blames others	Says the right things generically	Specific quality/safety story, owns mistakes
Specialty fit	No credible answer for the specialty the role requires	Some exposure, not deep	Demonstrated, specific experience in the exact specialty (restoration, precast, testing, etc.)

A candidate scoring 4-5 across the board is a fast yes. A candidate scoring 1-2 on technical skill for the specific project type you need is a no regardless of the other three — this is a trade where the specialty is the job.

Bricklayer / Mason & Concrete Finisher.

Bricklayer / Mason: "What's the tallest wall or most complex brick pattern you've laid out?" · "How do you handle a course that's coming out of level partway through?"

Concrete Finisher: "Walk me through finishing a slab pour in weather outside the ideal range." · "How do you know when a slab is ready for its final finish versus needs more working?"

Restoration Mason & Concrete Form Setter / Carpenter.

Restoration Mason: "Describe how you matched mortar composition on a historic repair." · "How do you decide when a piece of existing masonry needs to be saved versus replaced?"

Concrete Form Setter / Carpenter: "Walk me through setting forms for a complex or non-standard pour." · "How do you check for square and plumb before the pour, and what do you do if it's off?"

Masonry Foreman & Concrete Pump Operator.

Masonry Foreman: "How do you sequence a crew across multiple scopes on the same site?" · "Tell me about a time you had to pull someone off a wall for quality reasons."

Concrete Pump Operator: "What's the largest or most technically difficult pour you've run a pump for?" · "How do you handle a pump breakdown mid-pour?"

Estimator & Project Manager.

Estimator: "Walk me through a takeoff on a masonry or concrete package." · "Tell me about a bid you lost and what you learned from the debrief."

Project Manager: "Tell me about a masonry or concrete job where the schedule slipped because of weather. What did you do?" · "How do you coordinate masonry/concrete scope with the general contractor's overall schedule?"

Precast Concrete Technician & Concrete Testing Technician.

Precast Concrete Technician: "What precast components have you fabricated, and what quality checks did you run at each stage?" · "How do you handle a mold or form that's producing inconsistent results?"

Concrete Testing Technician: "Do you currently hold an active ACI Field Testing Technician certification?" · "Walk me through how you'd test a fresh concrete pour on-site — what are you checking and in what order?"

In a referral-driven trade, a strong candidate is often already known to someone else.

Once a candidate scores well across all four scorecard dimensions, don't let the offer sit. In a small, referral-driven labor pool, a genuinely strong mason, finisher, or restoration specialist is frequently already known to — and being pursued by — other contractors in the same trade network.

If you're building this pipeline continuously rather than per-opening, this is exactly the stage where a maintained set of trade relationships pays for itself — you're not starting the relationship-building from zero every time a seat opens.

Four ways this interview goes wrong before it starts.

- **Treating "masonry experience" as one skill.** Flatwork, vertical brick, block, and restoration are different skill sets — ask about the specific one your role needs.
- **Skippping the weather and scheduling conversation.** This trade is weather-dependent by nature; a candidate's answer here tells you a lot about how they've actually handled real job conditions.
- **Treating a restoration specialist like a general bricklayer.** Underselling or under-paying specialty skill is a fast way to lose the candidate you actually wanted.
- **Moving slowly on a strong candidate.** In a referral-driven market, a genuinely strong candidate rarely stays unpursued for long. Compress the time between a passing scorecard and an offer.

The eight questions to ask every candidate, regardless of role.

Walk me through the last three project types you worked.

What's the largest or most complex job you've run start to finish?

How do you handle conditions (weather, schedule, material issues) that expose inexperience?

What's your process for checking your own work before a foreman or inspector does?

What made you start looking for something new?

Tell me about a time a job didn't go as planned.

Tell me about a time you caught a quality issue before it became a bigger problem.

How do you like to receive feedback from a foreman or inspector?



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