
Physical Product Designer interview questions and answers

This **Physical Product Designer** interview profile brings together a snapshot of what to look for in candidates with a balanced sample of suitable interview questions. It focuses primarily on physical product design but many of the questions could equally well apply to a [Digital Product Designer interview](#).

Physical Product Designer Interview Questions

When interviewing Physical Product Designers questions can be broken down into three useful approaches: Understanding customers; understanding constraints; and placing process over outcome. It's not reasonable or useful to expect a candidate to design something in the course of an interview so the emphasis should be on understanding how they approach a problem, what questions they ask and what process they use.

There are also some classic questions which are worth including:

- Who are their role models?
- Where do they go for inspiration?
- How do they keep on top of current design trends?
- What's an example of great design (digital or physical)?
- What books/exhibitions/conferences or communities do they attend or admire?
- As a designer, what do they think is the most important aspect of their job?

What you're looking for is an interest in design that stretches beyond the boundaries of their own specialisms. Are they aware of and capable of thinking critically about the design decisions that surround all of us in our everyday lives? A great designer is thinking about improvements to these details.

Operational and Situational questions

The assignment

An approach we favor is often referred to as **ideation**, in which the candidate is presented with a very general problem with little or no detail. They are then asked to generate as many ideas as possible. The next step is to design a possible solution based on this thinking. The indicators you are looking for are:

- Is your candidate fluent enough in ideas to fill up a whiteboard?
- Can they identify their own best ideas?
- Can they respond creatively to constraints and explore ideas that move beyond the obvious.

Operational questions

Portfolio review

- Talk to us about your studies; tell us about an aspect of your course that you found the most engaging.
- What's your current occupation/What are you currently working on?
- Take us through a couple of your favorite pieces in your portfolio. What was your design process for these pieces? What problems were you trying to solve? How did you make a certain design decision?
- To what extent do you "own" the work in your portfolio, and can you be specific about which aspects?
- How do you prototype your ideas? How do you know when you've got it right?
- Tell us how you put yourself in the mind of the user. What kind of research methods do you use when you're starting a new project.
- Tell us about a project that didn't go as planned and the reasons that led to it. How did you solve the problems that arose?
- Do you have a side project you'd like to talk to us about?

Role-specific questions

Technical Questions

- How would you design an ATM for kids? (Look out for candidates who start with parents' needs for teaching children about money, or do they dive into the interface.)
- Turn to a whiteboard exercise. Example question: Design better big city transit timetable, map and signage.
- How do you critique your own work?

More resources:

- Source and recruit Product Designers with Workable's [Boolean search cheat sheets](#).

Pro tip: It might sound unfair but one winning approach to posing a design problem is to ask for the impossible. The point of the problem is not to identify the perfect answer but to get an insight into how the candidate thinks. The best way to test a candidate is to focus on a niche that they're not

familiar with.