



- Alison Monahan: Welcome back to the Law School Toolbox Podcast. Today, we're counting down our top ten episodes for incoming 1Ls. This list is, of course, good listening for anyone, but it's especially good for those getting ready to start law school this fall. Your law school toolbox hosts are Alison Monahan, that's me, and Lee Burgess. We're here to demystify the law school and an early legal career experience so that you'll be the best law student and lawyer you can be. Together with the co-creators of the [Law School Toolbox](#), the [Bar Exam Toolbox](#), and the career related website [CareerDicta](#), I also run [The Girls' Guide to Law School](#). If you enjoy the show, please leave a review or rating on your favorite listening app. If you have any questions, don't hesitate to reach out to us. You can always reach us via the [contact form](#) on LawSchoolToolbox.com, and we would love to hear from you. With that, let's get started.
- Lee Burgess: Welcome back to the Law School Toolbox podcast. Today we are counting down our top ten episodes for incoming 1Ls. This list is good listening for anyone but especially for those getting ready to start law school in the fall. If law school's looming out on the horizon, here are some episodes we recommend you check out. In the categories of logistics, getting ready, tips for nontraditional law students and first generation students, and thinking ahead. Remember, you can find all of our episodes and archives by number and topic at [LawSchoolToolbox.com/podcast](#).
- Lee Burgess: Alison, let's get started. First up, what do you think is the first category of podcast episodes we should talk about?
- Alison Monahan: Well, first up, let's talk about some money stuff because that's always a concern for incoming 1Ls and also some things about logistics and what you need to be doing. We have a couple of highly recommended money episodes, and those are [number 38](#), where we really focus on whether you can actually afford law school, and the [episode number 92](#), which is the money edition for 1Ls. Let's talk a little bit about what we talk about in both of those episodes.
- Lee Burgess: Right. Well, starting with the first [episode 38](#) about whether you can really afford law school, we really talk about law school debt and why it is a huge issue for so many people. We talk about the realities of debt, so what's the average law school debt, the causes of this debt load that can be up to almost \$200,000 for some people depending on where you're in school, which is insane. \$200,000 is so much money. The pros and cons of alternate approaches to pay off your loans, because I think some people may have never taken out student loans at this point, or they may not really understand what they're biting off as far as actually the logistics of how you repay these loans.
- Alison Monahan: Exactly. People are hearing a lot about LRAP and other sorts of federal loan repayment options and whether they are or are not actually going to be around. If we talk about the downsides of these things, it may or may not be obvious.



The real point of this episode is making sure you understand what you're in for and what your loan payments are going to look like, what your job prospects are likely to look like, what your school might not be being totally straightforward about, unfortunately.

Lee Burgess: No.

Alison Monahan: Whether this includes your job prospects, bar passage, scholarship options, whether you're going to be able to keep your scholarship after the first year because this turns out to be a big issue, and also things about how to save money, how to negotiate financial aid, and some potential side hustles. If you're concerned about debt, you're concerned about loans, you're concerned about that type of thing, which I think anyone's who's taking out student loans should be concerned about, this is definitely a great episode for you to tune into.

Lee Burgess: Yeah.

Alison Monahan: We'll link to all of these in the show notes, so you don't need to be frantically taking notes.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. I think it's a really good solid episode with a lot of stuff that a lot of people overlook when they think about loans. Then moving onto [podcast episode 92, the Top 1Ls Questions, The Money Edition](#), this comes from student questions that we get emailed. People are nervous about money, so we talk about things like taking scholarship money at maybe a lower ranked school instead of going to a more prestigious school and whether or not that that is a good decision or at least what you need to take into consideration because I think that decision point for everybody can be a little bit different. We also talk about how to negotiate scholarship offers because I think most of us don't even know that that's a possibility to initiate.

Alison Monahan: Total possibility. I did it.

Lee Burgess: Yeah.

Alison Monahan: I got lots more money. It was great.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. Those couple of phone calls or emails can make you a lot of money.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. It probably might actually be some of the most effective time you ever spend can be negotiating financial aid with your law school.

Lee Burgess: Yeah.



Alison Monahan: Because in a lot of cases, they really will give you more. If you want to find out more, we're not going to do a whole episode right now on that. But, hey, [podcast episode 92](#), tune in for tips on how to negotiate your scholarship offers.

Lee Burgess: Exactly. We talk about the reality of student loans a little bit more, how much you should take out, how disbursements and repayments and the impact of interest really work. We also talk about how to find money other places, maybe getting support from your village or looking at alternative sources of loans and scholarships that may not be quite as expensive. We introduce how to budget as a law student, which is something that makes people cringe, but it's super important. We also talk about some of our favorite thrifty life hacks and side hustles of how you can save money in law school.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. Then finally, we talk about a topic that most people really don't think about until about this time of year when they're graduating, which is what you got to think about in terms of the bar exams, and bar expenses, bar loans, what's necessary, what's reasonable, ways to save money there because that ends up being ... A lot of people end up having to take out another loan after they've graduated just to pay for their bar expenses and to have the two months of living expenses to study for the bar exam. That is something you want to be thinking about ahead of time. You've got to pass the bar.

Lee Burgess: Right.

Alison Monahan: If it costs money, it costs money. There may be ways to reduce that so that you don't end up having to take out another like \$5,000 in loan money that you're going to have to pay back just for two months.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. I think that's really true. After we've kind of moved through these episodes where we give you the nitty-gritty details about money, then we move onto recommending [podcast episode number 104](#), which is law school essentials, what to buy and not to buy beforehand because I think-

Alison Monahan: In other words, what do you need to spend money on or not.

Lee Burgess: Right, exactly. What should go in your budget and what can get tossed from your budget. You might feel like you need to go on this huge shopping spree to get ready for law school, but I think that it is not always the case. You may be able to pick and choose what you actually need to get started and spread out the love over the period of time so you're not quite so saddled with a shopping list to get ready for classes. Specifically, we talk about how you carry all your stuff, whether or not you need to buy a new computer immediately. You might be surprised to know that we don't actually think you need to buy a new computer immediately. That you might have a locker at school kind of like high school.



Alison Monahan: Yeah.

Lee Burgess: Law school's kind of high school.

Alison Monahan: It's a locker situation.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. We talk about the locker situation, but that can also inform what you bring with you to school, do you need like a nice leather briefcase, what sort of notebooks and binders you need, and why you need highlighters in many, many colors. Alison needs more highlighters and many more colors than I do, but everybody should have colors.

Alison Monahan: Hey, everybody needs at least a few. I'd say like four to five colors minimum.

Lee Burgess: That's true. Yes. And, how best to use technology. You don't need every type of technology that you can get your hands on, but you do need to have the technology you need to get your work done. We also talk about note taking software and the pros and cons of that, although you and I are big fans of old school handwriting-

Alison Monahan: Right.

Lee Burgess: ... and life essentials like clothes and lunchboxes and household items and ways other people can help you even stock up what you need.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, I mean, I think this one's a good one if you're just sort of like, "What do I need to bring to school with me? Are people going to laugh at me if I carry my books in a rollie bag?"

Lee Burgess: Right. The answer's no, by the way.

Alison Monahan: Well, they might, but you'll still probably be happier.

Lee Burgess: It depends though. I see a lot of rollie bags every time I'm on a law school campus.

Alison Monahan: Well, it makes sense. I went totally like style conscious and got myself this Timbuk2 bag, and I think I talk about this in this episode, so I'm not going to totally rehash it. It was not the most practical solution for carrying ... because it was a messenger bag, so it goes kind of around your body. It was not the most practical solution for carrying around like five huge casebooks. A backpack or rollie bag is probably more practical. Anyway, we go into a lot of detail about different options for carrying your stuff, which turns out to actually be kind of a big deal because you don't want to hurt yourself carrying your law school books around.



Lee Burgess: No.

Alison Monahan: That's just kind of silly.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. Let's talk about ways to add money, is chiropractor visits, massage therapists.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, exactly. You're setting yourself up for a world of pain for the rest of your life if you don't figure out a decent solution for carrying around these enormous casebooks.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, exactly.

Alison Monahan: Or you could use an electronic solution, which we'll probably talk about on some other podcasts. All these things, you know, I think it's good to really think through what you need, what you don't need, and sometimes you just don't know. It's totally fine to hold off on buying stuff, but [episode 104](#), will give you a lot of tips on what you probably need and what you probably don't need. Then you can decide what you're going to buy and what you're not going to buy.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. I don't think we talked about this in the podcast, but I was just thinking if you have a birthday or something over the summer, you could totally create an Amazon wishlist, like a registry to start law school.

Alison Monahan: Oh, for sure.

Lee Burgess: That would be brilliant.

Alison Monahan: You don't even have to. You could throw yourself a law school shower.

Lee Burgess: Oh, that's a really good idea.

Alison Monahan: You're like, "Great. We're going to have a party." Instead of being a Tupperware party, you're going to buy me stuff for law school.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. I think that's a brilliant idea, especially if all your friends are getting married and having kids and you're going to showers and you're not. You're going to school, and you're throwing showers for everybody else.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, exactly.

Lee Burgess: You might as well say, "Hey, I am not going to need that wineglass, and later if I decide to get married, off my registry. You can skip that, but I need an Amazon gift card right now. It's really important."



- Alison Monahan: Yeah, exactly. Anyway, tune into that one if you're not sure what to buy or what not to buy. Those are kind of our big three money for starting law school topics. Now we've got a couple on kind of the preparation process, the transition process. Lee, what do we recommend there?
- Lee Burgess: Yeah. First, we recommend to start off by listening to [episode 43](#), which is "[Getting Mentally Prepared to Start Law School](#)." In this podcast, we discuss how you've got to get mentally ready for the challenges which might be academic in nature or more personal around stress and mindset and just the acknowledgement that there are going to be techniques that you can use on any type of challenge to ensure that you're moving forward and keeping things under control. We answer the question, is law school really that challenging, how do you handle the volume of work you will see in law school. We give you some time management tips about how to plan your schedule.
- Lee Burgess: We talk about self-motivation after a tough day, which there are lots of tough days, so it's a good tip. We also talk about mindset, which is something we've talked about in other podcast episodes as well. Dealing with a growth, we talk about the growth mindset versus the fixed mindset, but how do you handle failure and the mindset you have to overcome these obstacles can make a big difference in whether you are successful in law school, so getting introduced to that idea and really thinking about how you want to approach failure and bumps in the roads is important. We also talk about self-reflection and your support network because things still happen in law school. Crises happen in law school, and you need to have people around you to help you through.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. I've seen a lot of research and studies suggesting that people who have in place a support network and then also have in place a plan for how they're going to deal with fairly predictable problems end up being more successful because they're not ... Of course, they're upset if something happens, but they're not totally thrown for a loop because they have people they can call upon. They may have a plan in place for, okay, if I lose my phone, here's what I would do. If I lose my keys, here's what I would do. All these things, that just, unfortunately, happen.
- Alison Monahan: This episode is really about thinking through some of these problems that you might encounter. Obviously, everyone's going to have a high volume of work in law school. That shouldn't be shocking. If you're listening to this and you haven't started, I pretty much guarantee you're going to have a lot of work to do. Thinking about how you're going to manage that. Where and when are you going to do your work. These are things you can be thinking about now so that you have a structure in place, and you're not just kind of flailing once classes start and suddenly, you have a bunch of stuff to do, and you have no idea how to structure your time.



Lee Burgess: Yeah, I think that that's really true. It's good to just think through this stuff beforehand so you've got some plans in place before classes start because it can feel a bit like a hamster wheel once classes start too. It's easier to make a lot of plans and decisions when you're not in the midst of trying to transition to school.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, exactly. You're going to face day-to-day challenges as school starts, but there are lots of things you can do ahead of time to get yourself ready for that, and that really is what [episode 43](#) is about.

Lee Burgess: Then we move onto [episode 89](#), which is the leap from undergrad to law school with one of our [Law School Toolbox](#) and [Bar Exam Toolbox tutors](#), Keri Clap, who has a very unique perspective because she teaches both at the undergrad level and at the graduate level in law school. She's seen people make the transitions, and she's taught the classes, legal studies classes in undergrad and law school so she really understands the difference which I think makes it a fascinating episode.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, definitely.

Lee Burgess: Some of the things we talked about were the differences between undergrad and law school teaching methods, course materials and study habits, and how struggling with the material is a normal part of the learning process. We talk about this a lot in our blog and on our podcast. The struggle is real, and it's okay. But, you do have to be willing to, kind of lean into the struggle and make sure that you're...what is it you say, Alison, in a good confusion, versus bad confusion.

Alison Monahan: Exactly.

Lee Burgess: We also talk about what it means to think like lawyer, which is a phrase that you will hear thrown around a ton. And, understanding the social and lifestyle differences of an undergrad versus a law school lifestyle. And, the other thing that she recommends we talk about is the importance of informational interviews and other ways to get a taste for what its really like to be a law student and lawyer before you take the plunge, because you wanna make sure that you are entering this path because you want to become a lawyer, and you want to embrace the legal profession or maybe you want to take a step back and re-evaluate your choices because it can be expensive and challenging.

Alison Monahan: There's no reason to be there unless you have a pretty good reason for doing it.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, and last thing, we touch on the importance of knowing yourself and what you need, and your learning style. It's a really interesting episode with someone who I feel like, has the wisdom of seeing students kind of go through this whole



transition from law school ... I'm sorry from undergrad to law school, which makes her a very wise, wise educator of the topic.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, I think that's true, I mean, there's a certain process and certain things that tend to happen, and I think the more that people prepare for that, probably the less that they're totally gonna flip out when suddenly it's like, "I've always been a really good writer, and now legal writing is really hard and confusing, I must be an idiot," it's like, no, that's just the way it is.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, exactly.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, I think that's definitely a great episode if you're wondering how this is gonna be a different experience.

Lee Burgess: Yep. Then, next up we have kind of two that are on the same topic, so we have [podcast episode 40](#), which is "[Preparing for Your First Semester of Law School](#)," and then a bonus one called "[Getting off to a Smart Start in Law School](#)," which is [episode 56](#). The first one of these, [episode 40](#) is really about a lot of the things that you just need to do to set yourself up for success, so we talk about our experiences getting ready for law school, which were pretty different, because you were coming from the same city, I was moving across the country. Things like finding housing, you know, your creature comforts, and also really stuff about preparing the people in your life, for your new law school life.

Lee Burgess: You know, things are gonna change, your relationships are gonna change, and there are ways to manage that, so that they're not, you know, totally imploding.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, which is something that does sometimes happen. You know, between romantic relationships, maybe people are not onboard fully with the transition to your new law school life, that's normal. But, also you know, so far as setting boundaries with your loved ones, so particularly your parents and things like that. If they expect you to be coming back for the holidays or expect you to be talking to them everyday and you're busy, and you don't have time for that. Also, stuff like the right way to leave your job, if you're working. You know, you don't want to burn any bridges that you don't need to burn. We have some suggestions for leaving on a high note. Also, stuff about what type of preparation should you be making this summer.

Alison Monahan: You know, should you be reading supplements, should you be reading cases, what kind of academic preparations do you make. We probably mention our start law school right course, and also things about thinking about your legal career now. We mention this with Keri's episode, but really thinking through what type of lawyer you want to be, what your goals are, what success looks like for you. All these types of topics are in [episode 40](#) about preparing for your first semester of law school.



Lee Burgess: And, then moving on to [episode 56](#), "Getting off to a Smart Start in Law School," we revisit the challenges that undergrads can face if they go straight to law school without a break. You know, you and I both had life between undergrad and law school, which I think is a bit of a different perspective than moving right into law school. You can often times tell by peoples... if you use pictures of your screensaver, that's how you could tell who just come from undergrad because the guy that sat next to... in front of me, from my contracts class had just come from undergrad and he would just have fraternity partying photos as his screensaver. As I was sitting behind I was like, "If I have to look at one more red cup picture, of like drunk guys in some east coast school I'm gonna lose my mind," but anyways-

Alison Monahan: There are pros and cons.

Lee Burgess: There are pros and cons. But, we talk about how working in the real world a little bit does prepare you for law school and we talk about our own experiences about returning to school after work. We also again, it seems like this is a very important thing to talk about because we talk about managing expectations of family and friends as you start law school. I think especially if you maybe had a job that made you pretty available, maybe you got off at like 5:30 at the end of the day, and law school's not gonna be the same. I think that's something you really do want to talk to family and friends about and we also talk structuring your time and getting rid of distractions, because distractions can make it really hard to efficiently get any work done, which makes everything take longer.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, absolutely, and on that note, we actually talk about how much time should you be taking in law school for certain tasks, so things like reading, class prep, deep thinking. You know, when you start law school, you have literally no idea how long you should take, and I think it's shocking to a lot of people how long, for example, your reading might be taking you. This episode might actually normalize that for you if you feel like your reading is taking forever, we might tell you, "Hey, you know what, you're totally on track. That's normal," and we talk about the details of creating your study calendar, some practical techniques for managing your time productively, and also really how to stay accountable in law school, because accountability and managing your time, I mean the reality is, that's kind of the difference between sink or swim for a lot of people.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, I think that's really true. We also mention that life is complicated. You might have kids, significant others, emergencies, pets, life happens during law school. You have to figure out how to manage all of that stuff.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, basically this episode is really all about managing your stuff.

Lee Burgess: Whatever that stuff may be. We all come with stuff.



Alison Monahan: It's not like ... life doesn't stop for law school. [Episode 56](#) is good if you know that maybe you have some demanding family members or you're not ... you know that you have issues with procrastination, or you're not sure really how to manage your time if you don't have deadlines or external accountability, so this is a good one if you struggle with those things, which frankly most of us do.

Lee Burgess: Then, we go all the way back to in the early days of the podcast.

Alison Monahan: Oh, the early days, not sure we liked any of these.

Lee Burgess: I know right. You guys can let us know if we are better now than we used to be. But, [podcast episode 2](#) is titled "[Why is Law School Hard?](#)" And, we didn't do this episode to scare people, but we do want to provide context and to alert you to some of the challenges you'll face in law school, and why people find it so intimidating. We talk about whether law school is the hardest thing we've ever done, which is an interesting way to look at the world. We talk about ways to make law school harder for yourself by choosing the wrong school that might be the wrong fit.

Lee Burgess: We talk about the impact of stress and anxiety on law students and the legal profession, which I think is something that we are only talking about in the legal profession more and more, thankfully, because I think it's this huge issue, but it's something that you need to think about when you're entering law school. And, then why the academics are hard and different, because it is a different beast, the Socratic method, the one final exam at the end of the semester, the format of law school is just-

Alison Monahan: A curve.

Lee Burgess: A curve. It's just put together. And, I know I've mentioned it on other stuff too, but I was... I got to see the Ruth Bader Ginsburg documentary this weekend, and she was one of the first, I think 9 women... when she went to Harvard, she started at Harvard, she was only one of like 9 women in her class. And, the professors wouldn't call on the women for the Socratic method. They just wouldn't call on them.

Alison Monahan: Wow.

Lee Burgess: Wow, that's fascinating. I guess I didn't really appreciate what a privilege it was to get called on.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, I guess that's one way of looking at it.



- Lee Burgess: Yeah, and then we talk about social aspects of law school. Like, what do you think, what are really social aspects of law school, Alison, that we kind of talk about in this episode?
- Alison Monahan: Well, I mean, its been awhile to be honest. But, I could imagine that we probably touch on things, you know, about relationships with your classmates and the pressures of different points of view in law school. I mean, there are lots of social aspects that can be challenging, and a lot of it depends on the school too. You know, different schools have different reputations. The school that I went to is probably pretty far out on the spectrum of super competitive, that kind of thing. Other schools are probably nicer and more supportive. I mean, you're gonna encounter a different experience, depending on who your friend group is, or who is in your 1L section, or really just even which school you've decided to go to.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah, and some of it is luck of the draw of who is in your section, and who, you know, who sits next to you-
- Alison Monahan: Do you meet your best friend? Do you meet your partner? I mean all these things could happen, or you meet someone who you just don't like at all, I mean, that happens too.
- Lee Burgess: It does. We talk about jobs. Both in law school and after law school, and why the job market and job hunting is challenging, and we talk about whether law school has gotten even harder over the last few years, and what trajectory that is on. Bar results keep dipping, although there's signs that maybe at some point they're gonna go back up again. But, it's a challenging experience out there, you know, you have to really work for excellence, and you want to do as well as you can and hopefully get licensed in the end.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, exactly. That's a great episode to tune into for kind of some basic background and you can hear the very early days of the podcast.
- Lee Burgess: And it's okay if you laugh at us, we won't feel bad.
- Alison Monahan: Just don't leave a bad review.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah, don't be like, "The second one they did was so terrible."
- Lee Burgess: So, you and I are both really passionate about success of non-traditional law students, and first generation college law students, and so I really am glad that we've been able to highlight some of these stories on the podcast.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, exactly, so one of the episodes we recommend for non-traditional law students particularly, is [episode 98](#), where again it's really based on questions



that we've gotten from incoming 1Ls, coming from people who are nervous about going to law school with some sort of unconventional background. On that one, we talk about who might even be considered a non-traditional law student, about how to balance school with your other obligations, whether you're working or have family situations, some financial challenges that arise that may be unique to non-traditional students, some resources that might help alleviate the stress, you know for example, the typical student budget is not gonna account for you needing to take care of other people. So, how do you handle that?

Alison Monahan: A lot of people are very concerned about getting accustomed to the academic environment after they've taken a break, so whether you've been working for a long time, you know, we get a lot of questions about, "Well I'm just not sure how to start being a student again," so we talk about that. We also talk about the advantages that non-traditional students can have over more traditional students, whether it's work experience, just a different perspective. I think, often times, people are surprised, but often times the people that end up doing best in law school are more non-traditional students who maybe have been out for awhile. I think sometimes people think that wouldn't be true, but I think it is true.

Lee Burgess: Kind of a bit more of a perspective of life in the world and I think it can be easier to keep things in perspective if you have had a little more life experience.

Alison Monahan: Well, and also if you have a family, and that kind of thing, presumably, you are better at prioritizing, you're more efficient with your time, so we do talk about you know having a master calendar, how to prioritize, and how to really use your village for help. Whether it's parents, you know that kind of thing, I think you know, if you're in a situation where you do have a lot of outside responsibilities, you're gonna need that support structure even more than someone who might just be coming straight out of college.

Lee Burgess: Yeah.

Alison Monahan: Then we talk some about the culture shock. If you're the first person in your family who's gone to college or gone to graduate school, you may feel like you don't fit in. We talk about how to handle that.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, I think one of the things about finding your village, and we talk about that through a couple of other podcasts, it's just a lesson that I continue to learn as I watch friends around me go through challenging times, is to just have the courage to be very specific in your ask for help. Don't just say, "I need help," be like, "I need help with getting my dog out on my night class nights. I need help with food. I need help." I think being very specific and kind of empowering yourself to say like, "This is how I need help," and asking your village, it just



makes it so much easier for people to step up and help you in the ways that are actually gonna support you instead of sometimes your village can come up with their own suggested ways of helping you that may not actually be helpful.

Alison Monahan: Maybe not really be so helpful.

Lee Burgess: So, if someone, like if you-

Alison Monahan: If they're like, "Wouldn't your dog have such a nice time if you got a new puppy, I'm gonna buy you a new puppy," and you're like, "That's not what I need."

Lee Burgess: Or if you've got a friend who's a baker, and if they're like, "I wanna bake you all these cookies," and it's like, "I don't need cookies, I need like a frozen dinner. I need a big salad. Could you bring over a salad?" Just don't feel like you're being ungrateful if you're not accepting help that's not moving you forward, but the only way to really do that is to be direct and as you have these conversations with friends and family, and those in your village, maybe even as law schools getting started, I think it's really powerful to just be honest and say like, "This is what I need help with."

Lee Burgess: I learned how powerful this was when I have friend who does a lot of work with people who are in crisis. She's been a chaplain, she's done hospice, I mean she is probably an expert at people who are in the middle of really traumatic experiences, and when she needed to ask her village for help, she sent out an email with an itemized list. She even suggested people for specific tasks she thought that they would be good for, and then she was literally like, "I need 5 dinners this week," and then she said, "Would so and so coordinate the deliveries of those dinners?" And, I was like floored, but I loved getting that email, 'cause I was like, "Thank you for making it so easy for me to help you," you know and I was like, "I'll deliver a dinner and I'll take over like coordinating this other thing," and then she's like... when I was talking to her about it afterwards, she's like, "and then I knew it was off my plate. I did not have to micromanage that anymore because my village was taking care of it," and it was just brilliant.

Lee Burgess: I was like, "I'm totally instituting this into my life the next time I'm going through a challenging time," and I think we not only taught better now, I think we're not really taught to do that because I think it sounds ungrateful, but I think it's really empowering.

Alison Monahan: Right, or people just assume someone's gonna define what they need and that's not really realistic. I mean it would be great if someone could just be like, "Okay, so it seems to me what you need is 5 dinners and someone to take care of your children, and this and that," but, who knows if you have a pet. I don't know half the time if my friends have pets, they need to say like, "Oh, you know the pet



needs to be taken care of." Okay, great, someone can... here's the plan for getting the pet taken care of, next item.

Lee Burgess: Right, exactly. I don't know, just using your organizational skills and your thoughtfulness to really be direct with people about how they can help. I think it really empowers people to help you and then they feel good, because they know you're doing something that is going to be of service.

Alison Monahan: Right. Another podcast that's really interesting, actually a first person perspective, is [number 113](#), where we talk with Shirlene Armstrong, who is one of our amazing writers who's written a bunch of great stuff on the blog, but Shirlene is the first person in her family to go to college and now to go to law school. This episode is really great, she talks about her decision to go, how that's impacted her and her family, you know. She talks a lot about how to handle the law school application process for applicants who aren't from that kind of typical law student background, including things about personal statements and possibly getting application fees waived and all that kind of thing. She really talks a lot about finding the right school for you, how to connect with your professors and friends and mentors. Shirlene is just one of those people who's amazing at connecting and she's one of those people everybody just loves and wants to help out.

Alison Monahan: She talks about how she found her first summer job, which is a really interesting story. A lot of advice really that... for people who do feel out of place in law school or who are considering going to law school as a first generation law students and feel like they might be out of place, I don't know, Shirlene is just fantastic. Anyone who's interested in this topic should definitely check out [episode 113](#), and I think you will find a lot of empathy and just a lot of great advice from someone that's really been in that position.

Lee Burgess: I'm so passionate about the fact that the world needs lawyers who come from, who have this perspective-

Alison Monahan: Right, I mean we don't... everyone can't be like a rich white guy.

Lee Burgess: Right.

Alison Monahan: Although it sometimes seems like that these days, that's not really the way the world works.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, and imposter syndrome and things like that can really come up where students who are in this position and so being able to find your tribe and maybe listening to [Shirlene's podcast](#) is a way to start to feel like you're a member of this tribe of these first generation law students who can be incredibly successful, but you know may need a few extra tips of how to navigate a



situation to get the most out of law school, because you know I had the benefit of having my parents who were lawyers, who could kind of help me navigate, but a lot of people don't have that benefit. You should reach out to your school, and find your tribe at your school, but know that you're not alone, and at least from our camp, we really feel like the perspective and the voices that come out of law students who have this background are so critical for our legal profession going forward.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, absolutely, and the reality is you know, you deserve to be there as much as anyone else, probably even more so. While it can be intimidating, I think you know, a lot of this episode, and a lot of the thoughts around this are really about finding that confidence to say, "You know what, I do belong here, and I'm not gonna quit. You're gonna have to basically deal with me."

Lee Burgess: Yeah, that's so true. It is so true.

Alison Monahan: Like it or not I'm here.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, and the last category of podcast episodes that you recommend you check out is "[5 Tips for Surviving the First Month of Law School](#)," which we really think is about thinking ahead. We talk about five things to focus on academically in the first month of law school, just to set yourself up for success later on. Some of the things that we touch on are why you should learn to read cases well in the beginning of law school, because you are going to spend a lot of time reading, so you might as well get very good at it.

Alison Monahan: True. The sooner the better.

Lee Burgess: The sooner the better, and the importance of keeping up with your reading, because getting behind is a terrible, terrible thing. There's really no coming back from that, you can figure out to work around it, but you don't really get caught up. We talk about avoiding distractions and paying attention in class, because you pay a lot of money for each one of those classes, you should get something out of it. And, we talk about note taking, we talk about the benefits of handwriting versus typing your class notes and why you should go visit your professors, who you're also paying a lot of money for access to, and their office hours.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, absolutely. In fact, I think we have an entire episode on this topic of interest. But, I think that's definitely an under utilized resource for a lot of 1Ls, they're afraid to go to office hours. In this one, we also talk about study groups, you know whether you have to join a study group or not. The answer is no, not if you don't want to. Also, we talk about the idea of the accountability partner, which can be kind of an alternative to a full study group, which maybe you don't feel like would be effective.



Alison Monahan: Again, we talk more about your scheduling and staying accountable because it's a huge, huge, huge issue for so many 1Ls. And, also we talk in this one about legal writing and legal research, and how you can take that class seriously, 'cause it is very important without letting it totally take over your life. If you're looking kind of for a jumpstart on the academic things you need to be thinking about, you can check out this [episode number 60](#). We also have a ton of more specific podcasts on almost every topic here, in fact, we're gonna do another wrap up specifically around academic podcasts, because we have so many of those, but this is a good one, you know if you haven't started yet, or you've just started and you're thinking in general about... and not really sure what this is about, this is a good one to kind of jumpstart your academic preparations, so that you have a general idea of what you're gonna be asked to do and how to do it.

Lee Burgess: I think all of these episodes just give you a good primer for the things to be thinking about as you're getting started for law school. You can listen to them on your commute to whatever, whenever podcast you listen to, I listen on walks 'cause I don't commute very often.

Alison Monahan: Jam on the treadmill.

Lee Burgess: Jam on the treadmill. You know, people say they listen to us when they're making coffee or eating breakfast.

Alison Monahan: That's pretty weird, we're like the NPR.

Lee Burgess: I know, who knew. But, it's just good to start noodling on this kind of stuff and reflecting on what your own strengths and weaknesses are and where you want to invest a little time to get ready for law school and if you're interested you can also learn more on our website about our ["Start Law School Right" course](#), which can help you with more specific tips and exercises to get you feeling academically ready for the school year as it comes up.

Alison Monahan: And feedback, don't forget feedback.

Lee Burgess: Oh, there's always feedback. Feedback is like our jam.

Alison Monahan: We're down with feedback.

Lee Burgess: We're down with feedback.

Alison Monahan: Alright, with that unfortunately we are out of time. Stay tuned throughout the summer, we're gonna have some new episodes about getting ready for your 1L year, and probably at least one more recap episode to give you some great academic podcasts you can listen to and you can also find all of our episodes



including archives by episode number and by topic at [lawschooltoolbox.com/podcast](https://lawschooltoolbox.com/podcast).

Alison Monahan: If you enjoyed this episode of the Law School Toolbox podcast please take a second to leave a review or rating on your favorite listening app, because we'd really appreciate it, and be sure to subscribe so you don't miss anything. If you have any questions or comments don't hesitate to reach out to Lee or Alison at [Lee@lawschooltoolbox.com](mailto:Lee@lawschooltoolbox.com) or [Alison@lawschooltoolbox.com](mailto:Alison@lawschooltoolbox.com), or you can always contact us via our website [contact form](#) at [lawschooltoolbox.com](https://lawschooltoolbox.com).

Alison Monahan: Thanks for listening, we'll talk soon, and good luck as you get ready to start law school.

#### **RESOURCES:**

- [Podcast Episode 38: Can You Really Afford Law School?](#)
- [Podcast Episode 92: Top 1L Questions: The Money Edition](#)
- [Podcast Episode 104: Law School Essentials – What to Buy \(and Not to Buy\) Beforehand](#)
- [Podcast Episode 43: Getting Mentally Prepared to Start Law School](#)
- [Podcast Episode 89: The Leap from Undergrad to Law School \(w/Keri Clapp\)](#)
- [Law School Toolbox Tutors](#)
- [Podcast Episode 40: Preparing for Your First Semester of Law School](#)
- [Podcast Episode 56: Getting off to a Smart Start in Law School](#)
- [Podcast Episode 2: Why is Law School Hard?](#)
- [Podcast Episode 98: Top 1L Questions: Non-Traditional Law Students](#)
- [Podcast Episode 113: Life as a First-Generation College and Law Student \(w/Shirlene Armstrong\)](#)
- [Podcast Episode 60: 5 Tips for Surviving the First Month of Law School](#)
- [Start Law School Right Course](#)