



Alison Monahan: Welcome back to the Law School Toolbox Podcast. Today, we're talking with Nathan Fox, LSAT expert and founder of [Fox LSAT](#) about some changes coming soon to the LSAT.

Your Law School Toolbox host today is Alison Monahan, and typically I'm with Lee Burgess. We're here to demystify the law school and early legal career experience, so that you'll be the best law student and lawyer you can be.

Together we're the co-creators of the [Law School Toolbox](#), the [Bar Exam Toolbox](#), and the career-related website, [CareerDicta](#). I also run [The Girl's Guide to Law School](#). If you enjoy the show, please leave a review or rating on your favorite listening app and 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.

Alison Monahan: Welcome back to the Law School Toolbox podcast. Today we're excited to be speaking with Nathan Fox, LSAT expert and founder of Fox LSAT about some changes coming soon for the LSAT. Welcome, Nathan.

Nathan Fox: Thanks for having me. Yeah, big, exciting news coming from [LSAC](#) these days.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. I mean, not much exciting news usually. So, tell us, what is happening here?

Nathan Fox: Well, they are finally making the transition over to a digital format.

Alison Monahan: Wow.

Nathan Fox: Yeah, that's going to happen in September of 2019, there's going to be a transition test where half of the people are going to take it on tablets and half of the people are going to take it on the standard printed form and Scantron.

Alison Monahan: And that's in July, right?

Nathan Fox: Oh, wait, July?

Alison Monahan: I believe they are transitioning with the July test and then it's fully digital in September.

Nathan Fox: Oh, that's right. You have an expert on, Alison, so that you can correct them. Yeah-

Alison Monahan: Well, I read the press release, so there you go.



Nathan Fox: I did, too. We mocked that press release endlessly on the [Thinking LSAT podcast](#) because it was just hilariously bad. Everything that comes from the LSAC, it's just so funny the way they write. But anyway. Right, right. The deal in July, they're going to transition it to the digital test. Half the people will take digital in July, half the people will take print, and as some kind of weird compensation for that, they're doing two things they've never done before, which is one, they are allowing you to see your score before you cancel it.

Alison Monahan: Right.

Nathan Fox: And two, they're going to give you a free retake if you do cancel it.

Alison Monahan: So, this is almost like a gimme, it sounds like.

Nathan Fox: It's kind of a freebie. I mean, law schools only care about your highest score, so that's a pretty big incentive to take it multiple times. As far as the incentive to cancel, though, I mean, canceling your LSAT score is generally stupid, so we just don't really recommend people do that.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, I just if schools are only looking at the high score anyway, what's the point?

Nathan Fox: Right, that's exactly right. They only report the high score to the ABA. They only report the high score to the U.S. News. They raise the prestige of their school by admitting people who have a highest high score. Your average score doesn't go into any of those metrics that get reported out, so they would be really kind of stupid if they used that for admission standards, right?

Alison Monahan: Right, well, I mean-

Nathan Fox: I mean-

Alison Monahan: ... it sounded like kind of an ego thing for the student. You don't have to admit that you had a whatever on the LSAT. You can just pretend it never happened.

Nathan Fox: Well, people should let go of that. I mean-

Alison Monahan: It's just a test.

Nathan Fox: Yeah, and nobody ... like, the law schools don't care. So, I don't know, yeah, people ... Also, there's been so many times where people have called me in a panic, wondering, asking, "Should I cancel? Should I cancel? This went bad, that went bad. I know I didn't do my best. Should I cancel?" And then I talk them out of it, and they get their score back, and it's at or a couple points above their average of their practice test.



- Alison Monahan: Right.
- Nathan Fox: People are just notoriously bad at telling how they did on tests.
- Alison Monahan: Well, I guess here, at least they'll find ... Well, I was wondering with the ... If they do the digital one, are they going to get the scores out faster, do you think?
- Nathan Fox: That, we don't know. They said that they are doing a bunch of things to make the LSAT more friendly. They have started offering the test more often, six times this cycle, and they're offering it I guess nine times in the next cycle, so that's good. You won't have to wait three months to take the LSAT.
- Alison Monahan: Right.
- Nathan Fox: And scores, I guess, have been coming out a tiny bit faster. They've actually been announcing dates that the scores are going to be released, and they've been staying on schedule with that or even releasing scores ahead of schedule sometimes. We speculate that they feel footsteps coming from the GRE.
- Alison Monahan: Right, as we talked about the last time we spoke on the podcast. The GRE is coming for the LSAT.
- Nathan Fox: They are, they're trying, yeah. As soon as Harvard Law School starts accepting the GRE, then of course LSAC's going to feel some pressure.
- Alison Monahan: Right.
- Nathan Fox: So, they have made some changes. You know, it's kind of hilarious, though, how they did the transition to digital. You understand that they are buying a whole bank of Samsung tablets. They're going to have their own tablets. It seems like the stupidest plan in the world, because you can take the GRE at any of those ... whatever they're called. Sylvan Learning Centers?
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, they have test sites, yeah.
- Nathan Fox: Right? Where it's just-
- Alison Monahan: And they have for a long time. I mean, when I applied to grad school a huge amount of time ago, it was already being done that way. This was in the 90s.
- Nathan Fox: I took the GRE and the GMAT both in the 90s or maybe early 2000s on a computer screen at one of those learning centers. You go in ... You call the place, you make an appointment or do it online, you show up. It's like some guy who just is ... some office guy, you know?



Alison Monahan: Yeah.

Nathan Fox: And he just gets you registered and puts you over on your terminal, and you hit go, and you're the only one there taking the test, so there's no one ... I think it's harder to cheat or I don't know, it seems pretty secure to me. You're sitting there on a terminal by yourself. The guy's in there to monitor you, but the software itself does all the proctoring.

Alison Monahan: Right, yeah.

Nathan Fox: And then at the end of the GMAT, it's like, "Would you like to see your score?" "Yes." "Okay, bang, here's your score."

Alison Monahan: And I thought I had done terribly on the GRE, and then I got my score and I was like, "Oh, that's totally fine."

Nathan Fox: Yeah.

Alison Monahan: And I kept it.

Nathan Fox: Meanwhile, the LSAT takes three weeks to get your score back because they've been doing pencil and paper with Scantrons. That's the thing that we're always laughing about on our podcast, is that I just can't believe that ... Why didn't they just make a version of the LSAT that could be administered at these learning centers that already exist? They're already everywhere across the country, but LSAC ... I don't know, they decided that they had to keep control or something.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, I was wondering about that. I was also wondering about the changes to the test itself, because when I saw this press release, I thought, "Oh, it's going to be like the GRE. It'll be an adaptive LSAT." And it's not. It's basically just, it seemed to me at least, the exact same exam but on a tablet.

Nathan Fox: It's like what happens when you get a bunch of lawyers, you know.

Alison Monahan: I was just like, "That's it?" Like, that's the big move?

Nathan Fox: Yeah, except for they had to buy thousands of these Samsung tablets, and now I'm just imagining them ... Are they going to have vaults across the country where these tablets live, or are they going to just be continually shipping these tablets back and forth around the country? How are they even doing it? I don't know, it seems so silly. But they charge ... they raised the price of it this year again. It's \$190 now-

Alison Monahan: Oh, wow.



Nathan Fox: ... to take it. It's probably going to-

Alison Monahan: That's a lot.

Nathan Fox: It'll keep going up. I mean, the LSAC charges law students so much money. By the time it's all said and done when you apply, it's \$190 for the test. I think it's \$190 or something like that for their credential assembly service.

Alison Monahan: Right, which is basically just putting the stuff together that somebody sends to them-

Nathan Fox: Yeah, but-

Alison Monahan: ... which I never really understood.

Nathan Fox: Well, the real unconscionable part is you pay for the credential assembly service, it's a fixed fee, \$190 or something like that. Maybe it's \$185. And then for every school you apply to, they have to send an electronic report out to the school, and they raised the price of that electronic report this year to \$45.

Alison Monahan: Oh, wow. That's really pricey.

Nathan Fox: Yeah. So, if you apply to 20 schools, you know.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, that's some serious cash. Just to send electronic files that already exist, because they've obviously already put them together.

Nathan Fox: Yeah. Yeah. It's an email. But they're going to charge you \$45 apiece for it. Plus people are taking the LSAT multiple times. That's \$190 a shot. Plus, when you take an LSAT prep class or you buy an LSAT book, you're paying a lot of money for the LSAC license fee that people pay. I mean, I write a gigantic check every year to the LSAC for all of the tests that I print for my classes, and questions that are in my books and stuff. I pay a crazy amount of money. So yeah, I say it all the time. People easily pay \$1,000 to LSAC by the time they're done with their applications.

Alison Monahan: Wow.

Nathan Fox: Yeah.

Alison Monahan: Pretty crazy. All right, well, let's back up a little bit. What do these changes mean for potential students?

Nathan Fox: Almost nothing. I mean, really, it's nothing to worry about. They did two trials of the digital LSAT already, and both of the trials apparently were really successful.



We just heard that it was really slick. We heard no negative feedback about it at all.

Alison Monahan: Okay.

Nathan Fox: They spent a gazillion dollars, I'm sure, to do this, but apparently the result is very slick. The test is exactly the same, so no change to the time, no change to the content. They are going to give you scratch paper, which we've never had scratch paper on the LSAT when it was in print, but now that it goes to tablet, ironically, they have to give you scratch paper so that you can do diagrams for-

Alison Monahan: Right.

Nathan Fox: ... your logic games. The reading comp has, for my money, a way over-complicated system of ... It lets you highlight in different colors and all that type of stuff if you want to.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, I saw that. I looked at the screenshots. I was like, "Huh, okay, this seems a little complicated, but I guess it's useful."

Nathan Fox: Well, nobody who's good at reading comp does any of that shit anyway, but that's-

Alison Monahan: Well, I would do it on paper.

Nathan Fox: I would not do it on paper.

Alison Monahan: Not different colors. I mean, I would underline things on paper maybe.

Nathan Fox: Just know we're getting into LSAT strategy stuff, which probably is going to bore your listeners, but neither of us recommend that anybody do any underlining or highlighting or note-taking or anything. We both agree that you should just read the passages and understand it. But reasonable minds can disagree on that, that's fine.

Alison Monahan: Well, personal habit. I'm not saying it does any good.

Nathan Fox: Sure, sure. Yeah, right, exactly.

Alison Monahan: If I tried it without it, I'd probably be fine, maybe better.

Nathan Fox: That's what I normally say. It's like, "Hey, if you're doing really well on reading comp, then I don't care what you do. If you're doing really poorly in reading comp, then maybe give up on these active reading techniques that you have



learned that aren't actually helping you." I look over people's shoulder and I see what they've underlined-

Alison Monahan: And you're like, "That's not actually relevant."

Nathan Fox: ... and I'm like, "Why would you underline that? You underlined the least relevant part. What is that?"

Alison Monahan: Yeah, that might be a bigger question going on here.

Nathan Fox: Or I'll go, "Why did you underline that?" And they'll go, "Well, I'm trying to underline the main point." And I go, "Yeah, but one, that's not the main point. Two, how would you even know that that's the main point until you're done reading the passage?" I mean ...

Alison Monahan: Right, until you know what the point of this is.

Nathan Fox: They're not explicitly stating their thesis in the first sentence. That's ... What?

Alison Monahan: Yeah. I try to remember on the LSAT underlining, how much I underlined. Definitely other ... I mean, definitely for legal questions, like hypos, I did, but maybe not on the LSAT. If it's just reading comprehension, I probably did just read it.

Nathan Fox: Yeah. Hey, I have to apologize to your listeners for any background noise here in Los Angeles. It's always lawn care day, so if you hear lawnmowers going by, there's just nothing I can do about it. They come twice a week, and they always come when I'm recording a podcast. It's just guaranteed.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, well, I've got band saws going next door off and on, so ... And I actually had to move from my office, which normally is quieter, but someone was playing really loud music, so I moved back to my other room where I can record, and then there's a band saw. So, we're just having a really awesome time.

Nathan Fox: Nice, nice.

Alison Monahan: Although it does remind me of the time I took the LSAT, because they were jack hammering in the parking lot right outside for the entire test.

Nathan Fox: Yup.

Alison Monahan: It was pretty awesome.

Nathan Fox: Yup, that's why people need to have multiple backup dates in mind when they're studying for the LSAT.



- Alison Monahan: Well, unfortunately I decided to take the LSAT and apply to law school a few weeks before I actually sat for it, so I didn't really have a backup plan. Not recommended.
- Nathan Fox: No, not recommended, but you're smart enough to pull it off. Also, it worked out fine for you, so ...
- Alison Monahan: It worked out fine, but my score was lower than it probably would have been without the jack hammering, and also if I'd practiced a little more, I probably would have done better.
- Nathan Fox: Oh, of course. Yeah, a little practice, little help, and ...
- Alison Monahan: Maybe taking one full test would've been a good idea.
- Nathan Fox: Yeah, a retake or two. Well, but then you would've gone to Yale and you'd be too fancy to even talk to me, so that would be a bummer.
- Alison Monahan: No, I was opposed to the Ivy League, although I ended up going to one anyway. Anyway. All right. Back to the LSAT. Enough of our life story. So, you're reasonably saying students don't really need to do anything differently to prepare for this digital version of the LSAT.
- Nathan Fox: I don't think so. We have created a new digital study tool that's at LSATdemon.com if you want to check it out. There's a free trial, and you can prep for the LSAT using our tool on phones and tablets and laptops. Again, that's LSATdemon.com, and over time, we're going to make that as close as we can to the format of the digital LSAT, just so that people will feel as comfortable as possible. But so yeah, they can definitely do stuff like that. But the content is the only thing that really matters. If you understand the questions, you're not going to ... It's really going to be no big deal. I mean, especially people these days, people are not uncomfortable using a screen, right? I mean, even older students, I just don't think are going to be disadvantaged because everybody has an iPhone.
- Alison Monahan: True.
- Nathan Fox: And the interface is really, really slick. There's a box to press if you want to eliminate an answer. You can press that same box to bring the answer back. There's another box that you press to just select the answer. It's real obvious that you have selected the answer. Apparently, everybody ... I mean, literally ... Lawyers like to complain, Alison. I don't know if you knew that, but ...
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, really.



- Nathan Fox: We literally got zero negative feedback about any of the digital tests, or either of the digital tests, or anyone who went and took them. Nobody had anything bad to say about it, and everything we heard about it was positive. So yeah, I think it's going to be real easy. And if you're worried about that July transition test, they also gave you the weird free cancel, free retake thing. So, yeah. Nothing to be afraid of, and then we'll be fully digital in September.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, so no choices. I mean, do you think the LSAT's ever going to move to a more adaptive testing? Or do you think it's just always going to be, "Here's what you get"?
- Nathan Fox: They just seem like they move so slowly. It's like what happens when business is run by nothing but lawyers, you know? They're just not ... They are not innovative. They're very careful. They don't want to get sued. I mean, I can imagine their customers are probably super litigious, right?
- Alison Monahan: Probably so, yes.
- Nathan Fox: And just are going to complain about everything, so ... I mean, the way that they did the free retake thing, the free cancel, free retake thing, I was just laughing about it because it's like, well the people who get assigned, they're doing 50/50 because it's best educational practices, according to them.
- Alison Monahan: I know, I thought that was funny. According to the press release. I laughed at that, actually, as well.
- Nathan Fox: Their press releases are really funny. So, because this is best educational practices and they're going to assign half to print and half to digital-
- Alison Monahan: Randomly, right?
- Nathan Fox: ... in July, I knew that if you get assigned print, you're going to think it's unfair and complain, but also if you get assigned digital, you're going to think it's unfair and complain. And so, you can just see them preemptively saying, "You know what? We're going to let everybody see their score before they cancel, and then if they do want to cancel and retake it, we'll just let them have a free retake and get rid of all of those complaints." Or you know, people will still complain, but ...
- Alison Monahan: Right. Well, it makes sense to me. I mean, sure, why not? Schools don't really care, so just let them take one anyway, whatever.
- Nathan Fox: Yeah, yeah. I definitely think people should do it. But I mean, one more note about the canceling. You really shouldn't be canceling. If you are prepared for the test, and if you sit through the whole ... you know, like your practice test scores are where you want them ... Please don't take the LSAT until your



practice scores are where you want them, because there's so many practice tests you can take and it's just silly to go randomly sit for the test when you ... People are like, "I want to see how I would do."

Alison Monahan: Right, that's what I was thinking. I can just see people ... I'm not saying this is a good idea, but I could see people saying, "Well, if they're going to let me retake it for free, I'll just show up and see how it goes," as if it's going to go that well.

Nathan Fox: Yeah, and when you cancel, it does say cancel on your record. So, I don't think schools care about one cancellation, because one cancellation, whatever, you were sick or ...

Alison Monahan: Yeah, your pet died, you know.

Nathan Fox: How about the ... We got an email from a listener who, someone in their testing room vomited on the table-

Alison Monahan: Oh, god. Ugh.

Nathan Fox: ... during the test and they didn't stop the test. They didn't clean it up.

Alison Monahan: What?

Nathan Fox: They didn't stop the test.

Alison Monahan: Oh, nasty.

Nathan Fox: So obviously, if I was in that room, I would've just walked out.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, for sure.

Nathan Fox: I'm not sitting through that. I'll be back next time, sorry.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, please give me a free test, that's disgusting.

Nathan Fox: Yeah, yeah. If you were to complain, I'm sure. But unless something crazy like that happens, I think you should just keep your score.

Alison Monahan: Right.

Nathan Fox: And reserve that one cancel for when something crazy happens. Because otherwise, if you-

Alison Monahan: Yeah, because you just don't know.



- Nathan Fox: Yeah, if you go in there just planning to cancel, then what? You're ...
- Alison Monahan: It's just kind of like, what's the point? You could just go watch a movie or something.
- Nathan Fox: You could take a practice test. Yeah, you could take a practice test. You could actually study and learn something so that you don't just bomb. Yeah, going in there and bombing it for no reason, I don't know, it's just not a good plan. I guess we should also talk about the timeline a little bit, because if you take that July test and get the free retake, then that'll push you off into September, and if you're taking the September LSAT, then you're not going to get your scores back until I don't know, late September or maybe early October. And at that point, you're not applying as early in the cycle as maybe you could. Right?
- Alison Monahan: So, when are they adding these new tests? Did they announce that yet, the new dates?
- Nathan Fox: Yeah, it's six times this cycle and it's nine times next cycle, and I just don't know.
- Alison Monahan: Okay. But you still ... Like we said, you're still going to have to go to some classroom or something and sit there.
- Nathan Fox: Yeah, I'm thinking they're going to use the exact same test centers and probably the exact same very questionable proctors that they have been using.
- Alison Monahan: I guess their only thought, if I'm thinking, "Why wouldn't they be using these learning center type things?" Is if they aren't changing the tests at all, then eventually the questions would get out.
- Nathan Fox: They would get ... Well, I mean-
- Alison Monahan: Somebody with a photographic memory is going to go in and basically release all of the questions at some point.
- Nathan Fox: Yeah, yeah. I mean, but isn't that going to happen anyway? I mean, so they are-
- Alison Monahan: Well, no. I think the difference is, with the GRE, they're mixing it up. They're not just giving the same 30 questions-
- Nathan Fox: Oh, because it's adaptive.
- Alison Monahan: ... because it's adaptive. So, I might get a completely different test than you do.
- Nathan Fox: Right, right.



Alison Monahan: So, I'm guessing that's probably their logic, at least.

Nathan Fox: Yeah. It does seem like they're going to be recycling tests a lot more, because they're still only disclosing three tests, even though they have six tests now on the calendar, so that means there's three non-disclosed tests, and those are definitely ... they're going to recycle those test questions.

Alison Monahan: Interesting. Well, definitely a lot going on in the world of the LSAC. Who knew?

Nathan Fox: Yeah, it's exciting. They're stepping into the 21st century.

Alison Monahan: The 21st century in 2018, '19, with a tablet version of the same exact paper test.

Nathan Fox: I just ...

Alison Monahan: I don't know why this cracks me ... I mean, it cracks me up too. It's just funny.

Nathan Fox: Did you hear about when they lost the tests? I think it was in Santa Barbara, and they lost all of the score sheets from one of the test centers.

Alison Monahan: No. After people had taken it?

Nathan Fox: And had to give ... Yep.

Alison Monahan: Wow.

Nathan Fox: So those people just had got a free retake kind of thing. But that's not cool, right?

Alison Monahan: I mean, like months later, and also ...

Nathan Fox: No, they actually did a special emergency extra test for those people who lost their score sheets. But with these tablets now, I'm just wondering really, what are they going to do? They're going to have to have them locked up in vaults somewhere. People are going to be doing tablet heists, trying to steal the tablets from the LSAC.

Alison Monahan: Well, I guess if the test is loaded onto them. I'm thinking maybe they load it, you take it, upload the scores, and then wipe them or something. But it seems like a lot of effort.

Nathan Fox: Yep, they did it the hardest possible way.



Alison Monahan: And also, they're going to break, tablets are going to have problems, they're going to be obsolete, you're going to have to replace them every year or two. Yeah, it does seem like kind of a bonkers way to do it.

Nathan Fox: It does feel like a huge win for whoever the Samsung sales rep was who-

Alison Monahan: Yeah, you can just see them going all in on that one like, "Oh my god. We've got a ..." I don't know, how many people take the LSAT every year? A lot. 40,000 people or something?

Nathan Fox: Yeah.

Alison Monahan: Wow, that's a lot. Yeah, that's a lot of tablets.

Nathan Fox: Yeah. I just imagine that guy or gal being just over the moon about selling. "I can't believe they actually did it!"

Alison Monahan: Exactly.

Nathan Fox: "They bought 10,000 of these tablets, oh my god."

Alison Monahan: Wow, that's crazy. All right, well, is there anything else going on in the world of LSAT? Anything interesting to report? Tell me more about this digital thing you've developed.

Nathan Fox: Oh, yeah, so the Demon actually is an adaptive learning platform. Again, it's LSATdemon.com, and you can get LSAT questions on your phone or tablet or laptop, and you can answer them, and the Demon then learns from which ones you get right and which ones you get wrong, and it keeps stats, and it shows you questions that are more appropriately at your level. So, you can drill all the different sections of the test, and then it has explanations built into the tool. It has video explanations from Ben and from me. It also has written explanations in there as well, so yeah. We're excited about it, and we're going to make it look as much like the digital LSAT as we can, just to make people comfortable.

Alison Monahan: So it's like the AdaptiBar of the LSAT world. Maybe you don't-

Nathan Fox: That's the idea, yeah.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. We recommend AdaptiBar for the MBE for basically everyone. I'm like, "There's really no reason you shouldn't be using this. Don't you want to know what you're not getting right?" You know?

Nathan Fox: Yeah, right.



Alison Monahan: Don't you want to be able to drill down into what you're doing poorly on and do better on it? I think it makes tons of sense. And yeah, do you find any changes in how people are starting to prepare or anything like that, or is it really just same old, same old?

Nathan Fox: These days, it seems like people are taking the test more times, for sure. They removed that restriction that you could only take the test three times in any two-year period, and they removed that restriction a year ago, and that definitely has led to people taking the test a fourth time or a fifth time. It seems like people are becoming more clear about the fact that law schools really only care about your highest score, and you can take it multiple times. People are ... Let's see. Well, lots of people applying for accommodations these days. That's sort of a strange new development. Still haven't heard anybody getting denied accommodations in the last two years.

Alison Monahan: Really?

Nathan Fox: I've literally not had one person tell me that they got denied.

Alison Monahan: Huh.

Nathan Fox: Yeah, so everybody is getting 53 minutes or 70 minutes even per section, which just seems outrageously long to me, but that's happening. I think it's still less than 10% of people that are getting accommodated, but I definitely hear stories from people who are just like, "Oh yeah, I have no credible case, but I ... I mean, I have a credible case. It's not a real case, it's just a case that will win for accommodations." And so, then people just taking advantage of the system and getting accommodated, which is lame, but I don't know. Nothing you can do about it, I guess.

And I guess, I don't know, the students are working harder than ever. Lawyers works. Future lawyers. I mean, they're just on their grind every day for months to achieve the LSAT score they need. But, hey, they end up getting \$150,000 worth of free law school tuition out of it, so that's why.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, definitely an example of putting in some effort can really pay off in the end. Do you think people need to study for months and months, or does it depend on the individual?

Nathan Fox: I think you are kind of foolish if you don't get the best LSAT score you can, because it's the first step in your legal career. I mean, it's going to determine not only where you go to law school, but also how much you pay to go there. It's a big difference. If you improve your score by sometimes ... The numbers I always remember are UC Berkeley a few years ago had a 164 25th percentile LSAT and a 169 75th percentile LSAT.



- Alison Monahan: Oh, wow.
- Nathan Fox: So, that means the whole middle 50% of the class is between 164 and 169. Well, think about what that means. If you get a 163, you're probably not getting in or they're just not admitting that many people with a 163. But if you get a 170, now you're actually above the 75th percentile, which means that you're probably in line for some scholarship money.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, you're getting money at that point if you're going to go there.
- Nathan Fox: So, that's a seven point improvement that not only gets you in, but also gets you tens of thousands or even \$100,000 in scholarship money. Why are you in such a hurry to rush into a worst law school and a mountain of debt? It just makes no sense.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, people sometimes write us and say, "Oh, my undergraduate grades aren't great. Do you think I can get into law school?" It's like, "Well, it depends how you do on the LSAT. That's the only factor that matters here."
- Nathan Fox: Yeah. I mean, all the other stuff matters when you're on the bubble. When all else is equal, then everything matters. But the LSAT is just the thing that can move the needle so dramatically.
- Alison Monahan: Oh, yeah, for sure. I mean, I'm basically like, "I can't answer your question until you tell me how you're doing on the LSAT. If you give me an LSAT score and a bad GPA, I can pretty much tell you about what you're going to get into. But if you have no idea what you're getting in the LSAT, this is a completely pointless conversation."
- Nathan Fox: Yeah, yeah.
- Alison Monahan: It can solve a lot of problems for you, let's put it that way.
- Nathan Fox: Yeah. I'm getting better at convincing people to take scholarships to law school. I just got a great email this last week on Thinking LSAT from ... She's a really strong candidate. She was like a 179 or a 180 LSAT, and a 4.0 undergrad. She was almost a perfect candidate, but she ended up turning down Harvard to go to Michigan instead, and Michigan gave her a full ride and a \$10,000 a year stipend. And so, just think about the trade-off here, or think about the deal. If you barely squeak into Michigan and pay full price.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah.
- Nathan Fox: You're now paying for her tuition and you're paying her rent and food.



Alison Monahan: Crazy thing is, I think most people who write to me with that question, I feel like the majority of them would still pay full price at Harvard, which I think it's kind of nuts, and I've tried to talk people out of it, but I feel like they would still do it.

Nathan Fox: You know, if you're trying to be a Supreme Court justice, I guess there is sort of a difference between Harvard, Stanford, Yale. But really, Michigan is a fine law school. You can be any kind of lawyer from Michigan, and she's going to come out of there with zero debt. She's also going to be competing against ... I mean, the people who are going to be paying her tuition for her and the people who are going to be-

Alison Monahan: Are also going to be probably lower on the curve.

Nathan Fox: That's what I'm saying. I don't understand why people don't understand this. They're going into Michigan with a lower LSAT score and lower undergraduate grades than she has, and now they're going to be competing with her for grades. While they pay her rent, they're going to be paying her for the privilege-

Alison Monahan: To beat them.

Nathan Fox: ... of kicking their ass on the exams. Really, but it's like ... It's a joke, except for it's not a joke. That's actually what happens. Anyway, I'm really strongly on the don't pay for law school kick these days more than ever. I just think if you can't get a scholarship, I don't know why you would go, because there's just too many people there that are getting scholarships. By the way, have you talked about ABA 509 reports on the show before? I mean, we probably have. I never stop talking about it.

Alison Monahan: Maybe not specifically, but ...

Nathan Fox: Oh. Well, if people want to see this information ... I mean, it's all a matter of public record.

Alison Monahan: Yeah.

Nathan Fox: So whatever law school you're interested in, just Google ABA 509 University of Michigan Law School, and the standard information report will pop right up and it'll show you the LSAT and GPA ranges for the school, but it'll also show you the scholarship ranges for the school. At many schools, they're giving ... Like, 80% of the class is getting some kind of a discount.

Alison Monahan: Yup.

Nathan Fox: So, arm yourself with that information before you start negotiating your law school tuition.



- Alison Monahan: I agree. I think you always should be negotiating, and yeah, I agree with you. I think people just have to think really, really, really seriously about the debt load they're taking on, even for any school, but certainly for a lot of schools. I would be hesitant to pay full price at Harvard. That would be me, but obviously a lot of people aren't. Yeah, it's just, it's so expensive at this point, and the bar passage rates at a lot of these places are absolutely horrific. I'm talking to a lot of people now who have failed the bar, sometimes multiple times, and you just feel for people, because you're like, "You paid all this money. You invested three years of your life. Now you're basically sitting and looking at the prospect. You may never actually be able to practice law in the area you want to practice because you can't pass the bar." You know? I think a lot of this starts with the LSAT.
- Nathan Fox: I mean, you don't get a refund, right?
- Alison Monahan: No, exactly. You don't get those three years of your life back, either.
- Nathan Fox: Yeah. I'm amazed that there's not some sort of a minimum bar passage rate just requirement for accreditation.
- Alison Monahan: Well, they kind of make noise about it occasionally, but I think the reality is, I don't know that they've ever de-accredited a school over their bar passage rate. They've kind of threatened to, but I don't think they've ever actually done it. So, point being, if you're struggling with the LSAT and you're looking at a school and you're thinking, "Oh, I can maybe squeak in here," look at the bar passage rate and think maybe you're probably going to be in that percentage that's not passing.
- Nathan Fox: Yeah, and to pile onto that, if you breeze into that school and get a full ride, your bar passage rate is going to be way higher than what their-
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, of course.
- Nathan Fox: ... bar passage rate is.
- Alison Monahan: Bar passage is very highly correlated with first year grades.
- Nathan Fox: This is a duh, except for that nobody seems to realize this. People think that, "Oh, no, Golden Gate has a really low bar passage rate, so I can't go there, even though they're offering me a full ride because I'm overqualified. I can't go there, because I don't want to fail the bar." And it's like-
- Alison Monahan: That's not really the way it works.
- Nathan Fox: ... "No, but you're not going to fail the bar."



Alison Monahan: Yeah. I mean, you could. Top people fail the bar every year, but you're going to fail once if you fail. People fail from Stanford and Harvard and whatever.

Nathan Fox: Yeah. Yeah, yeah.

Alison Monahan: It happens, but it's going to be pretty likely that you'd pass. If you're highly overqualified for the school, and if you do well your first year, you're almost certain to pass.

Nathan Fox: Yeah. You have your 165 LSAT, I'm not worried about you failing the bar, so ... Like, I get it.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. Like, you might fail once, but then come and talk to us. We can tell you why you failed and make sure you pass the next time.

Nathan Fox: I got into Hastings, though, and they have a higher bar passage rate, so I should go there. And it's like, "No, no, no. You squeaked into Hastings, which means that your bar passage rate's going to be on the low end of their bar passage rate, and you breezed into these other schools, so just go take the scholarship. You'll have a much better chance of competing in first year grades, which are all important. And then if it doesn't work out, you at least don't owe a quarter of a million dollars."

Alison Monahan: Yeah, exactly. I think people just have to be realistic about these things, and unfortunately, a lot of people are not. It's just so exciting. You're getting into law school, woo! But you've got to take a step back and really think about whether this actually makes sense for you.

Nathan Fox: Absolutely.

Alison Monahan: All right, well, we veered pretty far off the world of the digital LSAT, but ...

Nathan Fox: We always do.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. Before we wrap up, how can people get in touch with you if they want to hear more about anything you're doing?

Nathan Fox: Oh, well, you should subscribe to the [Thinking LSAT Podcast](#). You'll hear tons of me and Ben Olson talking about all things LSAT and law-school related. You can also go to my website, which is [Fox LSAT](#). I have classes in L.A. and San Francisco, and all sorts of online stuff.

Alison Monahan: All right, well, Nathan, thank you so much for joining us. It's interesting, as always.



Nathan Fox: Thanks, Alison.

Alison Monahan: My pleasure. If you enjoyed this episode of the Law School Toolbox Podcast, please take a second to leave a review and rating on your favorite listening app, because we would really appreciate it, and make sure to subscribe, so you don't miss anything. If you have any questions or comments, please don't hesitate to reach out to Lee or Alison at Lee@lawschooltoolbox.com or alison@lawschooltoolbox.com, or you can always contact us via our website contact form at, you guessed it, lawschooltoolbox.com Thanks for listening and we'll talk soon.

RESOURCES:

- [Fox LSAT](#)
- [LSAC](#)
- [Thinking LSAT Podcast](#)
- [LSAT Demon \(https://www.lsatdemon.com/demon\)](https://www.lsatdemon.com/demon)
- [Podcast Episode 97: The Future of the LSAT \(with Nathan Fox\)](#)
- [Podcast Episode 46: 4 Myths about the LSAT from Expert Nathan Fox](#)
- [Don't Go to Law School Just Because You're Good at the LSAT](#)