



- Alison Monahan: Welcome back to the Law School Toolbox podcast. Today we're talking about some of the scenarios you might encounter on law school exams. Your Law School toolbox hosts are Alison Monahan, that's me and 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. We're the co-creators of [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'd love to hear from you. With that, let's get started.
- Lee Burgess: Welcome back to the Law School Toolbox Podcast. Today we're talking about some of the scenarios you might encounter on law school exams. Now, of course, this isn't a complete list because let's be honest, anything can happen.
- Alison Monahan: And it's true.
- Lee Burgess: And it does, but there are some common unexpected events, that you can actually anticipate and be prepared for. Some of them have even happened to us.
- Alison Monahan: Many of them in fact. Yeah, and I think one of the biggest ones here really are the dreaded computer issues.
- Lee Burgess: Yes. I've had this happen to me.
- Alison Monahan: I mean, we've all had it happen, which means it's not actually really that unanticipated. It happens absolutely all the time. I don't think there was ever an exam I was in where someone's computer did not have problems.
- Lee Burgess: No.
- Alison Monahan: So, this is just something you need to be prepared for on an exam. You need a plan for what you're going to do. If your computer suddenly freezes, you might, you could be losing work, whatever it is. So, let's talk a little bit about this.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah. I think the big thing is you need to be prepared to hand write the exam.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. I mean, you at a minimum need to bring like a pen.
- Lee Burgess: All right. You need to have a pen maybe too.



- Alison Monahan: Yeah, I would say several.
- Lee Burgess: And you need to-
- Alison Monahan: Make sure share they have ink in them.
- Lee Burgess: Right. And you need to practice in advance doing some of this as a writing because it's actually really hard to write these essays by hand if you're used to typing them.
- Alison Monahan: It is and there are things you can do for example, skipping lines in the blue book, because basically what is going to happen if your computer will not just immediately reboot itself is they're going to hand you a blue book.
- Lee Burgess: Right.
- Alison Monahan: This is also why we suggest always, always, always outline your answer on paper. Do not outline your answer on the computer.
- Lee Burgess: No. One more time for the cheap seats. Please, please, please outline your answers on paper.
- Alison Monahan: Please.
- Lee Burgess: Please.
- Alison Monahan: Yes. We beg of you.
- Lee Burgess: We beg it.
- Alison Monahan: We know you're not going to listen, some of you, but you will regret this one day. I guarantee you. Because what happens if your computer crashes and you can't get it restarted and they hand you blue books and you have the same time that you basically had before or plus maybe five minutes to account for this situation. You don't have an outline anymore to your answer. That's major, major problem.
- Lee Burgess: That is a major, major problem. And it's not like you can write on top of the blue book, "Oh professors, so-and-so, my computer crashed. Please be nice to me."
- Alison Monahan: "Please give me extra points." They're not going to do that.



- Lee Burgess: They're not going to do that. So, I also think one of the things about our typing lifestyle is when I'm taking, we were just at a conference where I was hand taking notes and you just realize how bad we are at handwriting these days.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, our handwriting is terrible.
- Lee Burgess: It's terrible. And I don't have the muscle memory. I skip words because my brain is used to like how fast I type, not how fast I hand write. And so, you have to be thoughtful about this and when you're doing the handwriting in the moment make sure that it's legible.
- Alison Monahan: Right, if your professor cannot read it-
- Lee Burgess: They're not going to give you points.
- Alison Monahan: They're not giving you points.
- Lee Burgess: The other thing you need to do is by having this plan, you want to minimize the time that you were panicking because you don't get extra time, your ... I remember this happened to me for the first time that it happened in a criminal procedure exam. And you have this moment where you're like, luckily it happened early so I didn't lose work, but I just remember getting handed the blue book. And then I have this moment where I'm like, "I could fail this exam if I don't start writing." And I think I was kind of one of those people who didn't really think that I was going to fail anything. But then I realized I had a blue book with nothing on it. And if I didn't get my act together, I actually could fail that exam.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. I think when your computer's having problems, you both want to try not to panic, but if you realize it is a problem, you need to notify someone immediately, I mean at least for us, if you notified the proctor and they came over, they kind of started time clock and you've got that extra time back at the end.
- Lee Burgess: Wow, that's nice.
- Alison Monahan: The problem was that you got it at the end when everyone else was finished and packing up and talking. So that's another case where you really need to be prepared. You've got to have your earplugs, you've gotta be prepared and ready to focus for that extra maybe five minutes, 10 minutes when everyone else is finished because that maybe the five or 10 minutes you need to finish your answers.



- Lee Burgess: And maybe you should make sure you know what the school's policy is right-
- Alison Monahan: Exactly.
- Lee Burgess: Because I didn't get extra time. It happened on multiple exams for me, I just had really bad computer luck that my computer hated that exam software.
- Alison Monahan: The exam software is definitely a problem.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah. And-
- Alison Monahan: Hopefully it's better now, but I don't think it's really that much better.
- Lee Burgess: Well no, because they just had litigation over the bars-
- Alison Monahan: True.
- Lee Burgess: ... Software recently. And anytime that you're trying to download steps, your computer can get buggy. I mean these are imperfect technologies.
- Alison Monahan: And what they're trying to do is control your computer so that you can't do most things with it, which your computer doesn't really enjoy. So, there are almost always going to be problems. And to avoid this issue you want to do whatever you can in advance by making sure that you've downloaded the software early, you've got the right version, you know how to log in if you need to log in, you know what functionality it has. You're familiar with how to use the functionality means certain professors may allow or not allow things like spell check for example. If your professor allows spell check, they're probably going to have a higher expectation of your spelling. So, you need to be aware that, oh, this professor wants me to use spell check and therefore I probably should.
- Lee Burgess: And you also typically want to turn off any automatic updates. That's where a lot of computers start fighting with the software is when you load it and it gets kind of in your system and then if you do ... My computer seems to have an automatic updates every day. I don't even know. But it's always like do you want me to update your whatever, whatever. And you would just want for a while, turn off all of that stuff so you don't mess with the software.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. And I would suggest even if your computer's several years old and you haven't done anything to kind of clean it up, you might even want to consider a fresh restart of the operating system for example. Because you were saying all this stuff is downloading and installing, that's probably because you have, who knows like hundreds of things on your computer that you're never even using.



Lee Burgess: I know it's totally true.

Alison Monahan: So, you just want to be sure. Okay. This machine is clean as it possibly can be. I would say try not to borrow a laptop if possible, I mean if it's unavoidable, the software doesn't run on your computer and you can't get a different one. But generally speaking, something, you have used, you know the problem there is in, it's going to be more reliable. I mean make sure your battery is charged in case there's a problem with a power strip. Make sure you have a reasonable battery life. I mean I think most computers at this point, it should be able to get you through like a three to four-hour exam on one battery.

Lee Burgess: Especially if you have your WiFi off.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, exactly.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. So, you just want to kind of think through this all and if you're having computer problems, visit whoever is on your campus to kind of try and deal with them as early as possible. Don't test the software like the day or two before the test.

Alison Monahan: No, you want to do this early, it's not something you should really be doing like even during the exam week. Because if there are issues, you want to find out what they are. I think after the fact you want to make sure that your stuff actually uploaded if you crashed in the middle, and I talked to someone the other day, she got a really poor grade because some of her answers didn't upload after her computer crashed and she didn't know it until she got the bad grade. Then she went to talk to the professor and they're like, "Oh yeah, it looks like some of your answers isn't here." I mean sometimes there are ways you can find out at least how many pages or that kind of thing or how many words and if you see it's like massively less than it should have been, then you can talk to somebody about that.

Lee Burgess: Oh, that's anxiety inducing. I just like feel anxious thinking about that. The fact that there's missing answer and then you get a C- in the class and it's because your work didn't even get sent to the professor.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, I mean this can really play to your advantage. I had one class where the worst computer disaster I ever had, it just crashed. But I used that time to sit and think about my answer and I realized that my answer was 100% incorrect. It was a fed courts exam I was talking about a 1983, suit brought it statute in 1983 which is I vaguely recall has something to do with police or not police. And yeah, I had mixed them up.

Lee Burgess: It has to be-



Alison Monahan: Yeah, I had mixed them up. I'd written my entire answer assuming it was the other one. I can't remember if it was like police are not police. And yeah, at this moment of clarity while waiting for the proctor to try to fix my computer, I was like, "Oh this is 100% wrong."

Lee Burgess: You're like, this is bad.

Alison Monahan: This is very bad. Yeah. So occasionally it can help you, but I wouldn't expect your computer to crash to save your grade, but in this case it did. Because that basically just marked out a big chunk of it was like, actually no, this is not what I meant at all. So let's talk about that. I mean you realize halfway through the answer, it's totally wrong. What do you do?

Lee Burgess: I mean I think that that is hard. I think you want to stop and triage and think before you move forward because you don't want to delete necessarily everything.

Alison Monahan: Right. I mean I think the first instinct was just delete the two pages I just wrote, that is probably a bad idea. There may be something salvageable in there.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. I think you want to stop triage and regroup and maybe get out that scratch paper, redo a quick outline and see if you can salvage some of what you have but then figuring out how quickly you can move through the rest of the material.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. I mean basically this is probably not going to be your best score. But I actually did well in that class. But professor claims, he didn't read our answers, which I think it was actually true because there's no way I would've done well otherwise.

Lee Burgess: And if you can't clear your head, I think take a minute and takes the deep breaths, even walk out of the room, wash your hands, do whatever you have to do to basically get your act together. Because again, I think there's that moment where let's say you're an hour into the three-hour exam and you realize that you've gone down the wrong path, there is still time to mitigate it, but if you stop working, you could still fail.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. And I think too, you've also got to be really sure that what you think is wrong is actually wrong because once we get stressed out brains don't work as well. So, for example, the other day I had like a situation with a company where I was mad at them for something they had done and then I got mad at them for another reason and I call them for the second reason and halfway through the phone call was like, oh wait, I think this was actually my problem. And it was one of these we're like, oh, grams, oh yeah, pounds, grams, not the same system.



Okay, what? Nevermind, nevermind. So ,you don't want to have that moment where you're like, this is totally wrong and then delete everything and then you walk to the bathroom and you're like, actually that wasn't totally wrong and now it's gone.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. So, you need to have a little bit of clarity. And take a beat. You can take a minute or two to regroup if you need to. I think the same thing goes when your mind goes blank or you have testing anxiety. I mean, we've talked about this, the flight, we call it fight or flight, but now I've been hearing it say fight, flight or freeze, which I kind of like, because I think for most people they feel the freeze part of it. So, what do you do when you do freeze up and you do need to have a plan for that. And so, practicing taking deep breaths, doing some sort of breathing exercise, tactical breathing, we've even seen some exercises where you're like petting your own hand to try and kind of just calm your nervous system down, get up, go to the bathroom, splash water on your face.

Lee Burgess: You need to go through all of your options of how you can calm yourself down so the blood and the oxygen go back to your brain and then you will not be frozen anymore. The thing is, when people say, "My mind got so blank, I couldn't even answer the question anymore." I doubt it's going to be that way for three hours. You have to have a plan, yeah be like three minutes. You have to have a plan to get your body back to where a state where it can think clearly and then you're going to be able to start referencing the material. It's not like all of the law was just put in the garbage can that you had in your brain.

Alison Monahan: Still in your brain somewhere. And I think another thing, I mean this is also I think understanding that this is a pretty common situation and can help because sometimes people will think they're the only person that's happened to and it's like no, there're other people that this happens to and particularly if it's an open book exam, I think just taking a few minutes to look over, hopefully your one to two page outline that you have in front of you, if you're prepared to put in front of you. So that if nothing else, you're like, okay, I'm going to take some deep breaths and then I'm going to look at this outline and maybe that's going to trigger some stuff for me and make me think, because if you've done that correctly, I mean you probably should have identified the major issues in the course and I mean unless they've given the wrong exam, which does happen and we'll talk about.

Lee Burgess: It does about, yeah.

Alison Monahan: It's not going to be something that you've never talked about or never thought about. So it should be there someplace.



- Lee Burgess: I also think even if it's a closed book exam, you should basically have that two page sheet memorized and you can and I have done this too, just shorthand kind of sketched out what that overall outline looks like and just start at the beginning.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. Exactly. It's like you're in torch. Like, "Okay, am I in the world of intentional torts? Is this little crack on assault and battery or am I in the world of negligence or am I in strict liability?" Even something as simple as that can get your brain kind of working down the right pathway and you're at least like, okay, I know the universe I'm in now.
- Lee Burgess: Right. I've also had students tell me that if they can't get themselves going, they'll often go to their computer and just write the call of the question, break the page into multiple sections. To put-
- Alison Monahan: Like Bob versus Jill or Bob versus Sarah, and you're like okay, that's giving me something to work with.
- Lee Burgess: Step one time and then it's like having something on the page is just not as anxiety inducing. The reality is if you're someone who is worried that this is going to happen, I think one of the things that you need to be aware of is that it'll probably happen when you're practicing and getting ready for the test. So, if you put yourself in exam-like scenarios to practice, practice exams, you're probably going to have your mind go blank in that situation too.
- Alison Monahan: Hopefully.
- Lee Burgess: Which is great because then you can practice getting through it. And so, it's likely that your, this freeze reflux, the first time it happens to you is not going to be in the exam room. But what happens, I think when people are practicing is they freeze and then then say, "I'm not ready to do the practice exam."
- Alison Monahan: Right. It's that kind of defeating purpose.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah. I'm not ready to do it. So, I'm like peace out. I'm just going to shut my computer and walk away. I think that's a mistake because there's a learning opportunity for you there of how you fight through and get it done.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. For me, actually I did have it happen the first time I took a law school exam was the first time, it wasn't my mind went blank. It was that I read the question and I was like, "Okay, I'm pretty cool with that." And then I got up and I went to wash my hands and use the bathroom. I came back and looked at this blank sheet of paper and basically had an anxiety attack. So what I learned from that was that I should never ever, ever leave the room-



- Lee Burgess: To get up and wash your hands.
- Alison Monahan: No, until I had something on paper until I started writing. Because then if I had my outline on paper and then I had started writing and sometimes would even be like I'd get up and leave like the end of a paragraph or whatever then it was like, okay, I can jump back in. But for me I could not leave the room with a blank piece of paper or it was incredibly anxiety inducing.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah. But at least you knew that forever after that.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. But I mean I never learned that before.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah, man. So, but you at least you came back and got your act together.
- Alison Monahan: Well, I think I technically failed that exam, but it didn't matter because it was a pass fail class that they ended up passing me in anyway. But it was actually very eye opening, it really was.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah. What about if you are just running out of time. Because time management is something we hear from law students all the time as reasons why exams go poorly.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, I mean and again there are ways that you need to work on to avoid this problem. For example if your professor has given you the breakdown of questions in advance and point values in advance, you can actually work out in advance exactly when you need to move on. I would usually subtract out five minutes per question to give myself a little bit of a buffer and as soon as I got the exam I'd literally right at the top of it or on a piece of scratch paper when I needed to move on to each question. And then you basically just have to make yourself do it in theory. Of course that's easier said than done.
- Alison Monahan: I mean if you are running out of time, I mean I think it depends where you are in the test. If you are two hours into a three hour test and you've only done question one out of three, I mean that's a pretty serious problem. I mean you have one hour basically to do the rest and you basically just have to split that time and do the best you can. If you're 10 minutes from the end of a test and you're like, "Oh I haven't done anything." I mean if it's multiple choice fill in some answers and hope for the best. I don't know. Do you have any great tips here? I mean my basically tip is like don't get yourself in the scenario.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah. I think this is another thing that you've got to practice and that people are very self-indulgent around. We see this in the bar exam especially which is-



- Alison Monahan: All the time.
- Lee Burgess: ... All the time. But I've had students tell me like, "I couldn't stop writing."
- Alison Monahan: It's like, Really? You couldn't pick up your hands from the keyboard and move on because I think you could."
- Lee Burgess: Right. But I think we can get ourselves in these situations where we really believe that it's like we are powerless to stop and-
- Alison Monahan: Addicted to this question.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah, exactly. And the reality is is that's just not true. So, one of the things that you have to do during your practice is force yourself to work under time conditions. So, you are not only used to what that time feels like when you're studying for an exam and if you know the questions are going to be an hour long, doing a lot of hour-long questions, you start to know what an hour feels like. And that's important. Your gut reaction ... Kind of in your gut, you're going to have a feeling like, oh, I think I might be going too slowly, "Hey look, I just got an automatic update thing on my computer while we're in this podcast because it's so annoying. Say no, don't update." Anyway. But I think that diligence around this making sure that you're not being self-indulgent because here's the reality. If it's a three-hour exam and you do practice exams in four and a half hours and you are writing the most brilliant practice exams in four and a half hours-
- Alison Monahan: It doesn't matter.
- Lee Burgess: It doesn't matter because they're not going to read past three hours. And so, they don't care what you can do. The challenge of these exams is the best answer you could write in the time allowed. And I think that's the part that people don't practice and then they are shocked when they're not able to perform under time constraints.
- Alison Monahan: Well and I think another mistake people make too is thinking, "Okay, I've got limited time so I'm just gonna read the question and then jump into my answer." That is a mistake that is not going to probably result in a great outcome. And you're probably also going to run out of time because you don't have any structure for what you're planning on talking about. So, taking say an hour-long exam, taking 10 minutes to make a pre-writing outline that basically lays out every single thing you're going to talk about and discuss, that is going to help you write faster in the end. So, I think in practicing ways to do that, and then how do you make sure that you're actually getting everything from that outline to the page? Because that's something we see a lot with the bar



students do. We make them submit their outline and then oftentimes the tutor looks at the outline and is like well, "you would have done pretty well if you'd talked about everything on this piece of paper but you didn't."

Lee Burgess: Right. And so true. I know. I think that is a really good point. I think the other thing that I really learned once I was working in law schools and teaching classes and grading stacks of papers is that no one wants to read a brain dump. No one wants to read it. You think in the moment that your essay is some sort of special snowflake.

Alison Monahan: It's so brilliant.

Lee Burgess: It's so brilliant. But a lot of these seminar 1L classes, they may have 50, more, 100 of these exams that they have to read. Think about that. Like 100-

Alison Monahan: Have you ever seen ones that are literally just one paragraph?

Lee Burgess: Yeah.

Alison Monahan: Like the whole thing, a whole page. I'm like, "Where's the break? Where's the header? Where you're going with this? What do you think? I can't even tell you're thinking. I feel like you're just like, you've taken a lot of Adderall and you're just talking, what does this even have to do with anything?"

Lee Burgess: Right. Or my favorite, the essay question that had no capital letters. So, I think there's this idea of like, well, I'll just write as much as I can and then I can get as many points as possible. But professors want you to think before you write because it's hard to grade all these papers if they are just brain dumps.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, you need some structure. You need to let people know where you're going. I mean you might say that you've got to give them a roadmap to what you're talking about if they're going to be able to actually understand what your exam is, it cannot just be a stream of consciousness of everything that you've thought about in the last three hours.

Lee Burgess: All right. So, beyond what individual students could do, sometimes some wacky stuff happens. It's not even your fault. Sometimes it's not the right exam.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. I've heard of this happening. I've never actually had this happen.

Lee Burgess: I didn't either.



- Alison Monahan: I had friends this happened to, where literally, they handed out the wrong test and people kind of read it and they were like, "Is this what we talked with? This doesn't really seem to correspond to what we talked about in class." And I think in that case you would have to at least ask like the proctor, "Hey, can somebody confirm with a professor that we've got the right exam?" Because in this case, the answer was no, no, we handed you the wrong exam.
- Lee Burgess: Or I had some friends who were in a class where they were missing 25 multiple choice questions.
- Alison Monahan: Oh lovely.
- Lee Burgess: So, they were like, oh it only 25 multiple choice questions, not 50 multiple choice. That seems kind of weird. But it was that they didn't print the whole test. I had another class that I was a part of where a professor re-used a past essay question as part of the essay. A portion of the class had had that past exam as part of the academic support program.
- Alison Monahan: Oh that happened in my con law. It was half of it was an open book exam and there were, it was like a little bit, it wasn't exactly hidden and it was just kind of like far down a bunch of sample exams and half the class had printed the exam, that particular one, and the other half hadn't. And people did realize, but then they thought, "Well it's so old, it's common law. Is it a trick? Is he trying to get us to talk about something else?" Yeah. That was not a great scenario.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah. Yeah. So, you never know you. Well the good lesson is always do the practice exams.
- Alison Monahan: Right. All of them.
- Lee Burgess: All of them.
- Alison Monahan: At least print them all if they're going to be an open book exam.
- Lee Burgess: But I think you also just have to be aware that these wacky things can happen. Now I know that when that happened in one of my con law exams some people were really freaked out. I think they went and talked to the proctor and the proctor is basically like take the test that was given to you. And then afterwards people got really upset. They went to the dean. There was a lot of dialogue around this-



- Alison Monahan: Yeah, we know the whole thing. It was like, do we have to redo the exam, does he grade this exam, does he grade a different exam? I think honestly, they just made up grades.
- Lee Burgess: And I think the reality is that in the moment you don't have the luxury of freaking out. You take the exam that's given to you and then it will get worked out, however, it gets worked out in the end.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. But I do feel like if you were told you would have 50 multiple choice questions, you only to get 25 like that should at least be asked about.
- Lee Burgess: Well yeah, you should mention that to the proctor, but then go back and do the 25 that you have.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, you go back and sit down and do them basically.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah. Exactly. What about if someone's cheating?
- Alison Monahan: This is a tricky one.
- Lee Burgess: This is tricky.
- Alison Monahan: I mean a lot of schools have an honor code. So, if you see someone that you have reason to think is cheating, you're actually required to report them. I mean, what does it mean to think someone's cheating? It's kind of an open question. I mean, I know I've heard of people who are accused of cheating. I mean I think you have to be careful, but if you really think, okay, somebody is looking at a phone or something, they're not allowed to have or whatever.
- Lee Burgess: Checking outlines in the bathroom.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. I mean if you see something where you literally are like, this person is definitely cheating, I think you almost have to report that to the proctor.
- Lee Burgess: But I think you need to do it quickly and not let it distract you because you don't get extra time for being a good Samaritan.
- Alison Monahan: No.
- Lee Burgess: And going for the honor code.
- Alison Monahan: No. And I think there's also as a case where you want to understand what your honor code requires too. I mean, if it doesn't require that you are ... If you're



basically not a mandated reporter, then you can decide like, okay, it's not worth it to me. I mean, the first place I went to college, their honor code, if you saw something and didn't report it, you were equally liable.

Lee Burgess: Oh wow. That's a-

Alison Monahan: Yeah. It was very, very, very strict.

Lee Burgess: I don't actually know what my honor code in college was.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, well they made a big deal out of it.

Lee Burgess: I'm sure they did.

Alison Monahan: So, you just want to understand what the parameters you're operating within are - like if you're required to report then you need to be prepared to do that. If you're not and you're like, well, I'm not really sure what's going on, or I suspect something's going on, but I didn't really see it. Or if you do see it, I mean if you decide not to report it, well that's your choice.

Lee Burgess: I think the biggest thing is to just not get caught up in somebody else's drama in the room because you have to go back into your own work.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, exactly. And sometimes you don't know, you don't know if somebody is allowed some sort of adaptive device or something and you think they're cheating, but actually they just have an accommodation that you're not privy to, which is completely there right.

Lee Burgess: Yap. Exactly.

Alison Monahan: So yeah, focus on your own paper. Unless you see something like very, very, very blatant.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. I think you want to stay in your lane, and this is about you and you're going to be evaluated was on the page. Your professor's not going to also know that you spent 15 minutes talking to the proctor about something that you saw in the bathroom.

Alison Monahan: I think it's more like yeah, something in the bathroom or somebody you see like with the phone, like clearly in the room and be like, "Hey, I think this person has a phone. I'm going back to do my work." They can deal with it.



- Lee Burgess: Yeah, that's not your job. Maybe it's your job to tell the proctor and then you go back, do your own thing. You do you, other things that can happen in the exam room as you get really tired. Maybe you even get sick, you're hungry or thirsty. Different schools have different rules about what you can bring into the room. How prepared do you are, I know you are-
- Alison Monahan: I brought everything.
- Lee Burgess: Bringing everything.
- Alison Monahan: I always had snacks. I had like caffeine, I had not caffeine. I had pretty much everything.
- Lee Burgess: But now I enjoy the fact that you always have snacks because we just had snacks right before this.
- Alison Monahan: Exactly. So, I was definitely a hoarder when it came to exams.
- Lee Burgess: But every school is going to have different rules about what you can bring into the room. But you want to try and prepare to not have this happen. So, if you are used to having coffee in the morning and you have a nine o'clock exam, you should have coffee the day of the exam because you don't want to get to the exam and have like a caffeine headache.
- Lee Burgess: If your exam runs over lunchtime and you're always used to eating at noon, then you want to practice eating earlier and making sure that whatever you're eating is going to carry you over. And maybe not experiment with exotic ethnic food that you've never eaten before on an exam day so you're in the bathroom.
- Alison Monahan: Keep it simple.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah.
- Alison Monahan: Well, and also I think if you're allowed, you can bring in your basic first aid kit. If you are like, my stomach is upset. Well let's take a Pepto-Bismol. I've got a headache, I'll take an Advil. whatever it is. I mean, sometimes you just have to kind of power through it, but to the extent you can prepare and be prepared for these fairly inevitable things, you're probably going to get a headache at some point on an exam in your law school career. Take a couple of Advil, have a swig of water, keep writing.



- Lee Burgess: Right. Or sometimes if you're hand writing, some people get hand cramps, they get ... They want an Advil because their hands are starting to hurt. I mean there are lots of different things that can come up.
- Alison Monahan: Well and also if you're getting extra time, I think there's going to be more of an issue. So you instead of a four hour exam, now you're taking a six hour exam and so you, even if your school says you're not allowed to bring food or water or whatever, you probably want to ask about that as part of your accommodations because it's really hard to go six hours taking an exam without having any sort of snacks to eat basically.
- Lee Burgess: And sometimes if it's a long exam, you may even get to have input on how it's broken up. So, you want to be thoughtful about that and think when do you want to take a break?
- Alison Monahan: Right. They may say, okay, there's half the exams, multiple choice and half is essay. You can take a 10-minute break between them. Whatever it is you where you can actually eat something, but you want to kind of clarify this in advance so that you're not five hours in this exam and you're like, "Oh, I never even had lunch because it started at 10."
- Lee Burgess: I think if you get any sort of accommodations, you really want to make sure you understand how they play out. If you are testing in a separate room, if you have medical accommodations, if you have - some medical accommodations require that you're allowed to eat and drink or be closer to a bathroom or there's just a variety of situations. Breastfeeding moms, you want to make sure you understand exactly what scenario you're going to get into because you don't want to be in there-
- Alison Monahan: Arguing.
- Lee Burgess: ... Arguing with the proctor about what's going to happen. If you're a breastfeeding mom and you're like, "Okay, I'm going to pump." Do you leave the room to pump? Do they give you a space to pump? Is the proctor going to leave?
- Alison Monahan: Does the clock stop?
- Lee Burgess: Does the clock stop? Do they take your computer? What happens? You just want to know. So, there's no confusion on the day of.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. And you probably want to have that in writing someplace like signed off by whoever approved it. So, if there is an issue you hand it to the proctor and say, "Well this is what it says."



Lee Burgess: Right. Yup. What about if there's an issue with the room? Like it's too hot, too cold, too noisy?

Alison Monahan: Well, I mean you can ask once maybe, but basically you're going to have to suck it up. You need to have earplugs, you need to have-

Lee Burgess: A sweater.

Alison Monahan: ... A sweater. You need to be able to strip down to a tank top or whatever, you've gotta be prepared for these things because there's just no way to control that. And again, you can't spend all your time obsessing over the fact that somebody behind you is eating almonds.

Lee Burgess: Chewing gum.

Alison Monahan: Yeah chewing gum, making noise, clicking their feet.

Lee Burgess: The loud typist.

Alison Monahan: Or the typing.

Lee Burgess: Who are like boom, boom, boom.

Alison Monahan: Just it is what it is. So, bring your earplugs.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. And then things happen outside.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, earthquakes. Like a fire alarm.

Lee Burgess: Fire alarms.

Alison Monahan: All kinds of things.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. And so that is the type of thing where you look to the proctor to see-

Alison Monahan: Are they leaving the room?

Lee Burgess: Are they leaving the room? Are they going to do something? Are they saying that you're allowed to leave the room, but listen to what they say. Are you allowed to leave your stuff, take your stuff? Whatever needs to happen. You want to look for guidance because you don't want to do a misstep and then all of a sudden-



- Alison Monahan: Be accused of cheating or something.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah. Accused of violating some school rule that maybe you didn't even know existed.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, exactly. I mean obviously if it's like a true emergency, then get out of the room and deal with it later. But we're talking like short of an actual, like real fire going on outside.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah. I think, other things that you'd want to be aware of if your school sends out an email about the rules around, how do they handle cell phones, everything needs to be powered off. Maybe certain stuff isn't even allowed in the room or with you, whatever. Every school's got different rules. Just learn that stuff beforehand because one of the ways you can eliminate these silly mistakes from happening is, you know the drill. If you have a locker and you're not allowed to have your phone in the room, I would probably put my phone in the locker so it didn't accidentally turn on. I mean these things.
- Alison Monahan: You just don't wanna put yourself in a situation that could be quite serious or something silly that you just forgot that you were carrying your cell phone out of habit. Like, yeah. have your checklists. I would usually pack my bag the night before, have everything in there by the door ready to go so that I wasn't having to think about it in the morning.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah. And don't be late.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, definitely. That's the worst.
- Lee Burgess: Leave early. Have a plan, don't be late.
- Alison Monahan: And if you even considered staying near the law school, if they were not living there, they didn't have to worry about it in the morning. They just got up, they went into their exam. I mean that might seem excessive, but maybe you can stay on your friend's spare couch or something.
- Lee Burgess: Right. And making sure you have, like you said, by packing the night before, I think I had a friend who once forgot her ID, she forgot her wallet and she had to race back to her apartment.
- Alison Monahan: Sounds fun.
- Lee Burgess: I know, to go get her wallet, she ran a red light and all of this done because she had to have her ID or they wouldn't give her the exam.



Alison Monahan: Yeah. So, make sure you know what you need and get that set up ahead of time and hopefully you can avoid some of these problems even if there are things that inevitably will probably still happen.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. I think my final thought on this is one of the themes that has gone through this is there's a lot of stuff here that you can either prevent or mitigate by practicing, by educating yourself, by talking to your school, and so just spend that little bit of extra time making sure you understand what's supposed to happen, what's going to happen if things don't go well so you can handle the situation as best you can.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, absolutely. Well, with that, unfortunately, speaking of time, we are out of time. 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, 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 LawSchoolToolbox.com](#). Thanks for listening. We'll talk soon and good luck on those exams.

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