



Alison Monahan: Welcome back to the Law School Toolbox podcast. Today, we're talking about using technology effectively in law school, whether that's hardware or software. 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.

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.

Lee Burgess: Welcome back to the Law School Toolbox podcast. Today we're talking about using technology effectively in law school, whether that's hardware or software. So, one of the reasons we decided to do this episode was we just invested in new [iPad Pros](#) and we're super geeky and excited about them.

Alison Monahan: They're really cool!

Lee Burgess: They're so cool. Alison actually typed the notes for this podcast on it, I'm currently reading the notes on the podcast on it. And when we were thinking about why we wanted these and getting really excited in the Apple store after a business lunch the other day, we realized that a lot of the features we were interested in would be really useful for law students. And we've got to confess that we were actually on a working conference call with someone who was using a lot of this technology. And we were supposed to be totally paying attention to the content, which we were, but then we also had to take a moment and were like, "You have to tell us how you're doing that."

Alison Monahan: We were like, "How did you just make that move on the screen? That was really cool."

Lee Burgess: It was really cool. Like, "How are you making this so much more exciting on this Zoom conference call?" So, we really got excited watching somebody else use some of this technology, but now we're finding that it can be applicable in lots of different ways and we're incorporating it and doing what we do at work. But we think that it could also help you a lot in school.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. I think a lot of the features that made us think we wanted to have iPad Pros would actually be really useful for law students too. So, number one, you absolutely do not need to upgrade all of your technology devices for law school.

Lee Burgess: Please don't.



- Alison Monahan: In fact, we actually suggest that if you have a perfectly functional laptop, that you don't immediately upgrade it for the next year or two. Why is that?
- Lee Burgess: Well, because the bar exam is likely to be taken on that laptop. And what you don't want is a janky laptop that's going to be crashing or has battery life that just depletes in moments and things like that. You want to have a solid working laptop for the bar exam. And I think it's also important to remember you can use that money for other things, maybe such as a tablet, and it might even be a cheaper option. But what you're really doing in law school is word processing. You don't need a super high functioning, top of the line computer to run Microsoft Word.
- Alison Monahan: No. I mean, I used my prior MacBook Pro from, I think, 2009 until 2018.
- Lee Burgess: It was amazing to watch you give up that computer.
- Alison Monahan: I loved that computer.
- Lee Burgess: I know.
- Alison Monahan: Well, because it was a 17-inch and they didn't make it later. Apparently it's the least popular model ever sold, but the people who loved it, really, really loved it.
- Lee Burgess: You really loved it.
- Alison Monahan: I did love it, and every time I went to the Apple store, they made fun of me because they were like, "You should just get a new computer." I'm like, "I don't want a new computer. I just want you to fix the problem with this computer." And they're like, "God, these people with the 17-inch monitors, you just will not give them away." Eventually I downsized to the 15-inch. The point being, that computer worked fine. There was no reason for me to replace it until it really started to have issues. And I think it was battery issues and it was overheating. It was getting to a point...
- Lee Burgess: It was getting tired. It was like, "Put me out to pasture!"
- Alison Monahan: It was at the end of its useful life. But there was no reason for me to have upgraded it four years earlier just to have a cooler model, because it worked fine.
- Lee Burgess: Right.
- Alison Monahan: The same thing with your phone. My phone at this point I think is three or four years old. It works fine. I don't really care. So, if you keep that until you really



have to upgrade it or it gets stolen or whatever, then you can spend that money on more fun stuff, like a new tablet.

Lee Burgess: Right. So, before you go buying your new devices, you want to think about what you're going to get out of them and then purchase things accordingly. But you should also double check to see if your school or any stores that you're buying them from have any student discounts. Some companies do; I think Apple does.

Alison Monahan: I think they do, and they're often pretty good.

Lee Burgess: Yeah.

Alison Monahan: I definitely remember buying my laptop through the school, because we got a pretty sweet discount.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. So, don't go out the summer before law school and invest in a whole lot of technology, one, that you may not even use, but two, that you might even be able to get cheaper once you have a school ID.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, exactly. So I think the point is, be thoughtful about this. Don't just rush out and buy stuff because you're starting school. But if you do think you want to buy stuff, there's some kind of cool stuff you could buy these days.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. So let's talk about how excited we are about our iPad Pros. I wish we could have gotten a discount from Apple.

Alison Monahan: This is not sponsored.

Lee Burgess: No. I have a friend who does marketing in Apple and I'm pretty sure if I went to him and was like, "Listen to our podcast", he'd be like, "Cool dude. I'm not going to give you anything."

Alison Monahan: So we paid full price.

Lee Burgess: We did.

Alison Monahan: But I think there are a couple of exciting things about this. One, I think it's one of the first tablets I've seen... And I'm not a tablet expert – there may well be other ones out there that can do a lot of the same things. You should definitely check. They're probably cheaper. We're paying an Apple premium. But it is a legitimate laptop replacement in a lot of ways. I probably wouldn't want to type a huge paper on it with big citations and things like that, but it is totally fine when you have the attached keyboard for note taking, shorter writing. Anything you need to do I'd say up to 10 pages or something, you'd probably be fine on it.



- Lee Burgess: Yeah. I downloaded Microsoft Word onto the tablet, and I opened documents on it and you can still do things on it. I haven't fully explored footnoting and things like that, but it does now run a lot of these programs which you didn't use to be able to run on an iPad. And so, that is really changing the game.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. And maybe you can really do all of your citations and things too, I don't know.
- Lee Burgess: I don't know. Somebody should do that research and then tell us about it.
- Alison Monahan: I just feel like it was already so difficult to do those on a laptop. I'm probably not going to want to try to do it with my finger on an iPad, but maybe you can. So if you have your old laptop, you can do the final edit to your thing. But yeah, it's completely fine for typing on.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah. And it's way more portable. And I think the one thing about law school is you schlep a lot of stuff around.
- Alison Monahan: Oh God, the amount, just the volume.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah. And so, you can work in more places, which is great. And now through a lot of your casebook publishers, like Casebook Connect, you can get electronic casebooks. So really, with one tablet, you could have all of your law school stuff on it, which is pretty cool.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. I'm just thinking if you find yourself in a cafe with an hour or two to kill and you have your tablet with you, you could be literally doing your reading, you could be making some outlines, taking notes, all these different things, that you're probably not just going to be carrying your laptop everywhere with you.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah. But where we really, really got excited about the iPad Pro was the new Apple pencil. They call it a pencil, right?
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. It's a pencil.
- Lee Burgess: The pencil.
- Alison Monahan: It's confusing.
- Lee Burgess: Which is a new version than the version that could be used with the older versions of the iPad. This feels more like a pencil. And we started drawing and taking notes and seeing the power of being able to use basically your tablet as a pad of paper. And it kind of blew our minds.
- Alison Monahan: It's a game changer.



- Lee Burgess: Yeah. It really is.
- Alison Monahan: It feels like a normal pen or pencil, but you can handwrite in really bad handwriting. I mean, I tested it.
- Lee Burgess: It's true.
- Alison Monahan: People could barely read...
- Lee Burgess: Even the guy at the Apple store was like, "Wow, that was..."
- Alison Monahan: That was pretty impressive. I was just like, "I wonder if we can convert this into written text." And sure enough, I could scribble on the pad and literally push a button or highlight or do whatever, and it accurately interpreted my horrible scrawled handwriting. I mean, there was no testing, there was no like, I have to train it. It just worked.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah. And this was using [Notability](#), which is a note taking app that you can download from the App Store. And so, we were just starting to brainstorm. Really, the sales guy was like, "I'll leave you guys to what you're doing."
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, like, "You're totally going to buy these. Let me know when you figure it out."
- Lee Burgess: Yeah, exactly. But we were thinking of all of the possibilities you could use for technology like this. So for instance, if you typed up briefs while you were doing your reading, you could then load those briefs into an app like Notability and take handwritten notes on the briefs during class. So, it allows you to kind of live in this hybrid world between handwriting and typing, which is I think kind of the magic spot. You want some of the benefits of handwriting, the muscle memory, the self-editing, the having to process information, but you don't have to deal with paper, which is I think what prevents a lot of people from wanting to do handwriting.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, and there are some legitimate problems. We strongly encourage people to handwrite their notes in class, but there are some legitimate problems with bringing paper – A, it's heavy. B, it can be lost. C, you have to do something with it later. Whereas if you are writing on the tablet, it can just be automatically converted to text, so then you can take that in and start making your outline, your attack plan, whatever. Critically important. It can just be automatically stored in the Cloud, which is amazing. So you never have to worry about it getting lost. Think about bringing in your notes, bringing in your briefs and then writing over them, so you have everything. The other thing I find really remarkable is the editing. I remember doing Law Review editing and we had these giant sheets of paper and you had to do all these squiggly things on them.



And I think the day you got this, you sent me something you edited, and it looked just like that.

Lee Burgess: I did, it was in red pen. I know. It made me so happy. I don't know if it made my team happy, but it made me really happy.

Alison Monahan: I mean, no one's complained to me what I've sent to them is like that, which I do all the time now.

Lee Burgess: Well, because I think it's faster to edit. I really hate Track Changes. We use it with our students all the time, because it is one of the better ways to show people how to change their work. But when you're doing document creation or you're trying to even give feedback to another person, often times being able to circle and underline and make notes in the margins, it's just so much cleaner to read it in this way than it is to do typed Track Changes. And I can see a lot of benefits between sending documents back and forth between study group friends and things like that. You can do that using this marking up of PDFs and documents, and that's just going to make things seem so much cleaner.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, and you can edit your own work. I imagine sitting in a cafe and I'm editing a paper or whatever, and then...

Lee Burgess: I used to have to print everything.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, you have to print it. Ugh.

Lee Burgess: I think the other thing that is great is that you can do practice. One of the things that I think a lot of times students don't do is they won't print out practice questions to do practice. They try and have the question on their computer screen and they're flipping back and forth as they're trying to write. And I think that one of the things you could do is if you were doing practice assignments, you could have your laptop, you could have your tablet with the question, and then with the pen you could go and you could circle and mark it up and do your handwritten outline just as you would on scratch paper. And it mimics that without having, one, have you get access to a printer and do all of that work, but you're not losing those steps that I think are very important.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, and you can even split screen actually.

Lee Burgess: Oh, I haven't played with split screen.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. So you could have your pre-writing outline up on one side and then you could be actually typing on the other. I mean, it'd be a little tight in terms of space, but...



- Lee Burgess: Yeah, unless you have the bigger iPad.
- Alison Monahan: It's pretty cool.
- Lee Burgess: We have the smaller ones.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah. We also got these great cases, and you just throw them in your bag. It's just great.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. Basically, I think this could be an incredibly useful option for students, especially for the note taking and editing. It just eliminates so many barriers to entry for handwriting, which has so many useful applications and which we really recommend, a lot of the research really recommends. And if it's something you're interested in exploring, I think this could be a reasonable option to actually do that in a way that works pretty well.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah. And you never know. We saw this technology play out with us when we were the clients of someone on this meeting. It wasn't a lawyer that was working with us, which is probably why they were using this swanky technology, because it wasn't a lawyer. But we thought it'd be a really effective way to teach us material that they were trying to convey to us. And I think that using this type of technology could be used with your future clients. You can brainstorm different ways to streamline here, and it's really cool stuff.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, and I've heard of some virtual nomad lawyer types who have gotten rid of the laptop. They've just gone to something like this as a desktop replacement, and it looks really slick. So if you're in a client meeting and you're taking notes or giving them the one, two, three, and then you move stuff around the screen, they're going to be like, "Whoa." And then you can send them those notes afterwards, and it's just all pretty seamless and amazing.
- Lee Burgess: Yep, and it's all in the Cloud. So if they're like, "I can't find those notes," you're like, "No worries, I'll send them to you again."
- Alison Monahan: "Here we go. Here's the link. It's in [Dropbox](#)."
- Lee Burgess: Yeah. So, do you have to get one of these iPads? Probably not, but it might be a better investment than just a new laptop, because it does offer a lot of this functionality in a smaller package. It's going to be a lot more flexible than a laptop. We got these, what, like a week ago?
- Alison Monahan: Yeah.



- Lee Burgess: Maybe not even a week. I don't know. I've been using it a lot.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, no, just to test it out. I will say there are certain things that are a little clunky to start with until you kind of figure out how to put bullet points in or something. But there's a learning curve on everything. And like I said, other tablets probably are also awesome.
- Lee Burgess: And I've heard the Surface is good. I haven't used a pen on the Surface.
- Alison Monahan: I think the pen is the game changer.
- Lee Burgess: The pen is the game changer for me. I have tried this idea of eliminating paper in other ways, and I've always found the handwriting is just yuck. It made mistakes. You had to hold up part of your hand so it didn't touch the tablet.
- Alison Monahan: Oh yeah. The other day I was leaning my hand on it and taking notes, and it worked fine. It's pretty impressive. One note – you probably want to make sure that if you're buying expensive electronics of any type, you want to have some type of insurance. So, if you are renting, I would recommend renter's insurance. Make sure it covers theft or loss of electronic items. Sometimes they limit it to a certain value. This is the same for your phone, for your laptop, but you want to make sure that you're not going to be in a really serious problem if something happens to these very expensive gadgets.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah. So, now let's take a moment and switch gears and talk about some of the software that we think might be useful as you're setting up your electronic plan for running your law school life. The first thing, the easiest thing, the most direct thing is, you just have to use an electronic calendar. I fought it for years.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. Occasionally you get people still who fight it and I'm like, "Okay, we'll go to an office supply store and see what kind of stuff in this genre they can offer you." But really, I just feel like there are so many benefits to having an electronic calendar that it's really inadvisable not to.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah.
- Alison Monahan: I mean, how do you keep track of anything? You have to carry this huge planner around with you?
- Lee Burgess: Yeah, no, it's so much better to just do it, do it online. When you get invited to a birthday party, it just pops up automatically. It's just magic.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, exactly.
- Lee Burgess: Just do it online.



Alison Monahan: Yeah. And also, I think you can use this to structure your time, so it forces you... It doesn't force you, but it encourages you to block out things. For example, for deep work. When are you going to do that? You can just have a set schedule that you can kind of adjust as you go, but you can sit down and have a recurring item that appears every Saturday afternoon for four hours of deep work. Then at least it's on your calendar and if you decide not to do it, then you're making an active decision not to do that work.

Lee Burgess: So true.

Alison Monahan: Versus just thinking, "Oh, I'll do it when I get time." That time is probably not going to happen.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, exactly. Another tool that we've talked about a lot on the podcast is [Trello](#), which we use for a lot of different organizational things. But you could use it for project organization, life organization, to do list organization. And [Zapier](#) is something that you can use to even make it more powerful to connect it to other apps. I don't know. You know more about Zapier because you actually set it up for us.

Alison Monahan: Right. Exactly. So Lee and I both have Trello boards. There's an [article](#) we can link to that gave us this idea by I think the founder of Trello about how he uses it, and this is kind of next level stuff. But you can set up Zapier, which is just an app that connects different pieces of software, and I think they even have a free version. We pay them a quantity of money at this point since we're running so many, but I think they do have a free version. So, we can do things like if I'm in [Slack](#) and somebody asked me to do something, all I have to do is star that message and then it automatically goes into my Trello inbox. Or I can send an email if I think of something randomly, like I'm talking to my friend and they ask me to do something. I just send myself an email and it automatically goes into that Trello inbox. So basically, that board is then collecting all of our stuff. But you can also use Trello for anything that requires kind of a system or different discrete pieces that you need to keep track of.

Lee Burgess: Processes, collaborations.

Alison Monahan: So I think here for law students, it's really powerful for things like research projects, where you're going out and you're finding different documents and you're not quite sure how they fit together. You want to keep track of what you've done. So you can have different lists that are like, "Things I need to read", "Things I have read". You can make a note on why it does or doesn't apply. You could have a list for different issues. You're moving these cards around so that when you're ready to sit down and write, you have a very clear idea of what you've looked at, what you need for each issue, where you're going



to talk about; and critically, the pieces that you looked at that you're not going to use.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. So another tool that we use on our team is... Have we really decided, is it [Asana](#)? Is it Asana?

Alison Monahan: I don't know.

Lee Burgess: If somebody listening knows, will you just send us a note?

Alison Monahan: I mean, in yoga, it's an *asana*, but I think they pronounce it *Asana*.

Lee Burgess: Okay.

Alison Monahan: I don't know. I mean, I'm guessing.

Lee Burgess: This was a tool we used many moons ago that we have reintroduced into our lives.

Alison Monahan: We've recently returned to.

Lee Burgess: Recently returned to.

Alison Monahan: I think it's better for certain things.

Lee Burgess: I do, I do.

Alison Monahan: This is kind of the point. You want to think about what tool you're using to solve what problems.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. And I will admit, I've been cheating on Trello and I've been playing with a to do list on Asana, and one of the things that I like about it is it's really... I think it does have a few different views, but I've mostly used it in the list view, and it allows you to really do things in different priorities, make notes. So, on my to do list, which is incredibly long right now, I was able to give things different priorities and then I was able to add a little tag that you can see in the list. One of my things is I often times am waiting for somebody to get back to me, but I feel like I'm always torn, because do I cross it off when I've...

Alison Monahan: Well, in Trello, I have a waiting list.

Lee Burgess: I do too, on Trello, but I'm trying to incorporate the tools that we're asking our people to use. So, I also have that in Trello. But then I was kind of like, "Okay, waiting for Alison, waiting for whoever else." So that's made it nice. And then you can ask it to sort by priorities. It basically will just tell me, "These are the



five things that you have to do today." So I think that for some people who really like linear things, I think Asana is a really good option.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, I think it's great. It doesn't quite work the way my brain works as well as Trello does, but I definitely see the benefit. And particularly, say, if you're trying to keep something on track, for date-based things, anything like that, I think it's way better.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, so you should check that out. And it's free. Both Trello and Asana are free, so you can just mess around with it.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, see what makes sense to you.

Lee Burgess: Okay. Our good friend Dropbox. Just do it, just do it and save it to the Cloud.

Alison Monahan: At least put everything in a backup in the Cloud, and make it automatic. Then if it's something like Dropbox on a laptop, you just have a folder and you save your documents there and they automatically go into Dropbox and you never have to think about it.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. It's magic.

Alison Monahan: As soon as you start having to think about where you're saving things or did you upload it, it's not going to happen. I don't care if you use Dropbox or iCloud or Box or whatever; there are probably 10 other ones. Just use one of them and never think about it again until you have a problem and your laptop gets stolen and then you're like, "Oh, thank God I had all of this stuff in the Cloud." Done.

Lee Burgess: And that's the great thing about using, I think, a lot of these apps and tools. Going back to the iPad, I was setting things up and I downloaded Notability and it's like, "Do you want an automatic copy to be put in the Cloud?" And I'm like, "Yes, I do."

Alison Monahan: Please.

Lee Burgess: Please do. Check that box. Now if something happens to my iPad, I can wipe it remotely and then I haven't lost anything. And I think that's pretty magical.

Alison Monahan: Well, and sometimes people get a bug up their bonnet about, "Well, is it secure? Is somebody going to be hacking my files?" Honestly, who cares? I mean, really? You're a law student. I mean, does anyone really care what's in your [Evernote](#)?

Lee Burgess: That's a good point. My Evernote's pretty boring.



- Alison Monahan: Yeah, okay, it's a valid consideration. But the other point I think people who actually really do research this care about is, the reality is these companies are basically based on the fact that they're pretty secure.
- Lee Burgess: I'm sure Dropbox's security team is gigantic.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, they're pretty aces I think. So they are doing everything they can to stop people from breaking into this. I don't think we're going out on a limb to say this: It's probably a lot more secure than your law school's IT department-made stuff.
- Lee Burgess: I think that's probably safe. Yeah, so I think you've just got to do it because the option of not doing it is just...
- Alison Monahan: And we just hear so many stories still to this day, which astonishes me, of people losing work. And it's always like, you can't apply to Law Review, or you're going to fail this class because you can't turn this thing in. And that is just not acceptable. That should never happen.
- Lee Burgess: No. We remember the days of saving things to floppy disks. That was a real fear. You had your whole world on.
- Alison Monahan: The copies, yeah.
- Lee Burgess: You had multiple floppy disks.
- Alison Monahan: I think you also should back up on an external hard drive or whatever, but do not rely on that as being your primary source of your backups.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah, exactly. Okay, so then other apps I think that can help you with note taking, like [OneNote](#). I think Evernote can be really interesting to use for law school. We talked about Notability, which runs off of the iPad. But a lot of these note taking tools can help keep you more organized and make things easy to find. I think one of the things that we really liked about Notability and taking notes using the pen is this idea that you could draw out charts and make visuals. And then you can take that visual, copy it, and drop it into an outline. It's pretty awesome.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, exactly.
- Lee Burgess: It's so cool.
- Alison Monahan: You can make your own chart right on there.



Lee Burgess: Yeah. So stay tuned for that technology on The Law School Toolbox, because it's coming.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, you're going to be seeing that on the blog.

Lee Burgess: You're going to be like, "How much more stuff are they going to draw using their new technology?" And the answer is, it's going to be a lot.

Alison Monahan: It's definitely going to be a lot.

Lee Burgess: We're excited about it. We can't deny it.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. So again, with the note taking stuff, just think about what you need, and then there's probably a solution that does that. People are loyal to different solutions and they all are slightly different, but there's definitely one that's probably going to work for you.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. So we like using Slack. How many Slack organizations are you a part of? I'm a part of four.

Alison Monahan: I think three.

Lee Burgess: Okay. So yeah, I mean, they add up quickly.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, they do. And Slack, even among your study group... I personally am a fan of anything that can get people off of email, or at least get me off of email. And I think the advantage of Slack... I mean, Slack can be distracting if you have a huge group or whatever. But the great part about it is, say that you need to catch up on a chain – you just read the whole thing. It's not like I'm looking for certain emails or whatever. It's searchable. So, even within a study group, I think looking at ways to be more efficient, whether it's saving your documents in a shared drive or a Google Doc or whatever, and then using Slack to communicate, and then something like [Doodle](#) if you need to schedule. It just eliminates a lot of that annoying back and forth and like, "What are we doing?" And you can have a Trello board or an Asana board or whatever that organizes everything. Just thinking about these ways to kind of streamline your life and keep everything organized and in one place that you can access in different ways. Investing a little bit of time upfront can pay off big time, whether it's for yourself or for a group of people that you need to work with.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. What about ways to keep up with legal blogs and things like that? What do you think is a good way to do that?

Alison Monahan: A very underappreciated tool here, which is very retro, kind of '90s, but actually is very effective, are things like RSS feed readers. I think Feedly is one of them.



But basically, they aggregate based on this thing called an RSS feed that a lot of blogs just have on there. We have them. You can just copy the link, and then instead of going out on the web and getting distracted and looking at all these things, everything just shows up for you. So you can have the [SCOTUSblog](#) or whatever, and it's all just right there.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, it's really cool.

Alison Monahan: Yeah.

Lee Burgess: Alright, and lastly, the bane of everyone's existence is their email.

Alison Monahan: Oh God.

Lee Burgess: I know.

Alison Monahan: And schools still send so much of it.

Lee Burgess: They send a lot of it. I mean, even schools that we've graduated from send us a lot of email.

Alison Monahan: I think I've unsubscribed from most of those lists.

Lee Burgess: So you might need to come up with ways to filter it. Maybe do folders. Maybe you have a couple of different email addresses. Maybe you want to have one that your school is sending all this stuff to, one that you use for shopping. I mean, it gets very complicated.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. And sometimes people just give up and they say, "Well, I just don't read any email that the school sends." But that's not really a great solution either, because people at career services are actually sending out useful things; they're probably just sending too much of it. So at a minimum, you'd probably want to filter that into a certain folder, give it a label so that you can at least look at it.

Lee Burgess: On your iPad while you're in the coffee shop.

Alison Monahan: Right, and see, "Are they offering me a possible job? Are they telling me about deadlines for things that I need to meet the deadline on if I'm going to apply for this funding?" These are important things. Or even events that are happening. I think it becomes problematic if you just filter all that into spam and never look at it, because a lot of what you're paying for in law school is access to these types of events. So you've got to find a way to kind of make sense of it all without just letting it ping you all day. I personally think I would turn off my email alerts probably.



- Lee Burgess: Oh, I definitely have turned off all my notifications, which is nice.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, because part of this is you can't get too distracted by these devices. This is something I think most people struggle with. Cal Newport has a whole book on it, [Digital Minimalism](#). I think I read the first chapter and put it in a pile of books that I haven't ever finished reading. But it does look interesting. Imagine that you are in a coffee shop and you're trying to read your casebook, and then these notifications keep popping up from the New York Times telling you about the possible war with Iran, and then you've got an email coming in about some event that you might want to go to. This is very distracting. I think it's better to really think about dropping into these things on your own time and your own schedule, so you might have a few checkpoints that you check email or whatever it is. And then if somebody really needs to reach you, there may be some way they can do that via a text or something.
- Lee Burgess: Right. I think that that's kind of the way I have thought about my notification world, is that I get Slack notifications, which our team uses to communicate with each other.
- Alison Monahan: And even that I think auto snoozes at some point at night.
- Lee Burgess: I think after 8:00, I don't immediately get notifications.
- Alison Monahan: I think it does that automatically, actually.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah, which is great. And then you can set your time in the morning too for when they turn back on. But it's kind of like, everyone on my team knows, if you want to talk to me fast, you text me or you send me a Slack message, because I turned off my email notifications because I couldn't take it.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, and all these things, if you let them, will send you an endless... Trello will send you tons of stuff. They all send you tons and tons of notifications.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah, so you have to be thoughtful about it. But it's not like I don't check my email. I just don't get pinged every time an email comes in.
- Alison Monahan: It's distracting when they slide down and you're like, "Oh, what's that about? Oh wait, what was I reading?"
- Lee Burgess: Right.
- Alison Monahan: You want to have that mental space for actually focusing. Ironically, you can just turn them all off and then the only thing you see is what you choose to see. I think that's probably the best default option, versus... Because they all default



to "On", with sounds and banners and this and that, and you're like, "Okay, what is beeping at me?"

Lee Burgess: Right. It's so true. It's so true. So, you do have to be thoughtful about it. And I think with a little bit of a focus, you can make it easier to do work. Yesterday I had to get something done. It was going to take an hour. I was sitting at the computer and I had not been thoughtful about what I had shut off. I can't tell you in an hour how many times I said, "Do one thing at a time. Go back and finish the one thing you have to do today. This has to be done right now. Stop getting distracted." Because it's hard when you get a message from someone and then an email comes up.

Alison Monahan: "Oh, I'll just respond to that right quick." And then "right quick" is like you're down a rabbit hole and you're reading your other email, and then you're responding to that, and then you can't even remember what it was that you're trying to get done. It happens.

Lee Burgess: It does. It happens to all of us. So, investing some time to find the right tools to clean up your life. We talked about Trello being good for some things, Asana being better for others, but you have to experiment with some of the stuff. You can do that before even law school starts, and work on distraction, because there are always ways to limit use and establish good habits. Delete some social media off of your phone. Lots of different things you can do. We all struggle with this. It's an ongoing moving target, because the reality is these devices are built to be addictive.

Alison Monahan: They are.

Lee Burgess: We have to manage the addiction. It's not the device's fault. We are the humans, we get to control the devices.

Alison Monahan: It's the device makers' fault, but that's a separate podcast. Alright, with that, unfortunately, we are out of time. If you enjoyed this episode of The Law School Toolbox podcast – maybe you are listening on your device – please take a second to leave a review and rating on your favorite listening app. We would 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, and we'll talk soon!

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