



- Lee Burgess: Welcome back to the Law School Toolbox podcast. Today, we are going to talk about open book law school exams, and what sort of exams you might see after the changes to law school due to the COVID-19 outbreak. Your Law School Toolbox hosts are Alison Monahan and Lee Burgess, that's me. We're here to demystify the law school and early legal career experience so you'll be the best law student and lawyer you can be. We're the co-creators of the [Law School Toolbox](#), the [Bar Exam Toolbox](#), and the career related website [CareerDicta](#). Alison also runs [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 reach us via the [contact form](#) on LawSchoolToolBox.com, and we'd love to hear from you. And with that, let's get started.
- Alison Monahan: Welcome back to the Law School Toolbox podcast. Today, we're talking about how to make a smooth transition to open book and take-home exams since, well, most people are likely to have these this semester. And just for the record, we are recording this on Monday, March 30th, so we don't know what happens in the future. Alright, Lee, at this point, I think we're assuming...
- Lee Burgess: It still cracks me up that we have to do that.
- Alison Monahan: I know, right? We've never done that before, this type of situation.
- Lee Burgess: We've never had to do that.
- Alison Monahan: We don't know if every law school implodes in two days; it totally could happen. Alien abduction, I don't know. I feel like anything is fair game right now. So, back to the point, we're assuming really most law schools, if not all, are going to be doing some type of open book or take-home exams, right?
- Lee Burgess: Yeah. I don't know what else they're going to do. We just got word in the Bay Area that we're now in shelter-in-place until May 1st. I think most law schools are going to start doing exams the first week of May.
- Alison Monahan: I didn't even hear that. Huh, missed it.
- Lee Burgess: Oh, you didn't? I see you've been doing other things, instead of checking your phone constantly.
- Alison Monahan: I was doing my good deed for the week – delivering groceries to homebound people for the food bank.
- Lee Burgess: While you were doing that, the shelter-in-place order was continued. So, I think that as this unfolds, it's becoming more and more realistic that students are going to be taking these exams in the, quote, unquote "comfort of their own



home", and then the schools are going to have to shift. Even these 1L classes that typically are never given in a take-home type of environment are going to become take-home exams, and that's going to be a bit of a change for the professors, too.

Alison Monahan: Oh, for sure. The only other thing I was thinking is maybe there's a way that some people could do multiple choice if they did it online or something. But I think, generally speaking, we're going to be looking at some type of take-home essay type thing. Definitely my Civ Pro exam my first semester was a take-home. I think that might've been the only one my first year. But I think, number one, you want to try to find out as soon as possible what type of exams your professor at least thinks they're going to be giving you. Realistically they might even not know yet, but I would definitely start asking about this. Let's talk about some different options. What could people do here?

Lee Burgess: Well, I think probably what I would guess people are going to see are these timed take-homes, whether they'd be a three or a four-hour take-home, where you check it out at a certain time and you have to send it in at a certain time; or the 24-hour take-home, which I think you usually see in more upper division classes.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. My Civ Pro was a 24-hour take-home, but our professor did that for a very specific reason, in that he thought this is something you might actually see as a young associate in practice, as someone might give you an assignment that they need an answer to in 24 hours. He just felt like it was a more realistic, real world type thing. I've seen three to four-hour type of things. I've seen eight-hour take-homes. I've never actually had one of those; apparently they're horrific. Twenty four-hour, sometimes more than 24 hours. Friends of mine first year even had a 48-hour take-home, I think. So yeah, it was weird. They could also work in a group. People had their own opinions about how to teach first year classes at Columbia. But anyway, I think probably the most likely options are either going to be the four-hour, eight-hour or 24-hour. It's possible some people, some schools, may try to still do in-class exams. I think that's becoming increasingly less likely. It seems logistically challenging too, if they've told people to leave, but I guess it's not completely out of the question. But I think most places are going to have to send take-homes, because what else are they going to do?

Lee Burgess: Yeah, and they've sent everybody home. I don't know how they could call everybody back to campus with travel and all that stuff.

Alison Monahan: It seems pretty much impossible. If law schools are listening to this, law school administrators, don't do that. Just make them take-home.

Lee Burgess: Please don't do that. Just do the take-home exams. Don't make this more dangerous and stressful than it needs to be already. I think what will be



interesting to see what the law schools also do is if they want to try and kind of mimic the more typical 1L exam, where it's three or four hours, is what the technology logistics are going to be about. How are you going to, quote, unquote "get the exam", how are you going to turn it in and have it timestamped, what are registrars going to do? Are they going to try and use some sort of testing software? I think there's a lot of logistics that are still kind of up in the air, and it'll be interesting to see how they end up deciding to do it. But as they're figuring this out, you definitely want to ask questions. They have time to figure it out, but you don't want to get this information three or four weeks from now, when you're really in the middle of finally prepping for exams.

Alison Monahan: I think the other thing schools need to be careful about and people need to be aware of is, say that you're taking four classes and you have your exams spread out over a week, but each of those classes decides to give you a 24-hour take-home. Well, assuming you're going to stay up for basically 24 hours, that probably doesn't really make a lot of sense. I remember in our case, the 24-hour exam was our final exam, and they did that on purpose so that you could do your other exams. And then if you want to pull an all-nighter, go for it. But if you're thinking you're going to do that three or four times in a week, that may not be really realistic.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, and some students... I know that we've been getting emails and our tutoring students are taking one elective in a different campus or at a different school. I know someone we spoke to is taking an elective at the public policy school or something like that. Those final exam schedules could also be very different. You really need to take the information from all the professors and look at your schedule and make sure that it's going to be possible. And that's on you, not on the school. That's your responsibility as a student. You can go ask the registrars for accommodations, but you've got to own your own reality.

Alison Monahan: Right, and I was going to actually make that point around accommodations as well. If you do get, say, time and a half, does that mean you get 24 hours plus 12 hours? What does this even mean in this context, and how does that play out if you only have half a day until your next exam? You've just got to make sure that you've looked at these things and laid them out for yourself and said, "Okay, this can or cannot work." And if it can't work, go talk to someone as soon as possible. Don't go talk to them, but try to communicate with them as quickly as possible.

Lee Burgess: And I think if you are someone who does get accommodations and you're thinking through your needs, given where you are living or trying to study, that's another thing you want to start thinking through now. Your office of disability services, I would assume at the school is still up and running because everybody's doing distance learning. And your registrar and your Dean's office – all of those should still be able to answer your questions, but everybody's



getting inundated with so many emails that, start now. If you've got questions, start now because nobody's responding in five minutes.

Alison Monahan: Right, and I might even pick up the phone. I know it's kind of anathema to most people, but you could pick up the phone and call them and if someone answers, they're probably more likely to be able to give you an answer than if you just send them an email and have to wait for days.

Lee Burgess: In our new COVID reality though, wouldn't it be sending a Zoom room and like, "Can we meet you in the Zoom Room?"

Alison Monahan: Have you heard about this new app? I heard about it last night on a Zoom party call, called [Marco Polo](#)?

Lee Burgess: No.

Alison Monahan: This is apparently what the hip kids are doing, I didn't even quite understand it. I haven't had time to look at it, but apparently instead of sending a text message you send a call or something, I don't know. The whole thing seems crazy. Anyway, if you want to be on the cutting edge, go look up Marco Polo.

Lee Burgess: Marco Polo.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, apparently it's the cutting edge app of the COVID situation. Anyway, back to our actual podcast topic. Alright, so I think our advice is, on the take-homes, make sure you know, to the extent possible, how much time you have, what's going to be allowed. If it is a longer type of exam, often times there's a page limit. so you want to be aware of that. Sometimes those page limits can be very, very strict, so you want to make sure you're incorporating that into your practice, which we'll talk about. But you really want to understand what this exam is likely to look like, and let's dive into that. If people have been used to having in-class, closed book exams, where they have to rely really heavily on memorizing the law – maybe it's a racehorse thing, they're just trying to get it out as quickly as possible, maybe fairly limited analysis – I think these exams are going to be pretty different for a lot of people.

Lee Burgess: I think that's true. The questions are going to have to be harder and require more in-depth analysis because everyone's going to have the universe open to them. And I think the longer that time period, the more nuanced the question is going to be.

Alison Monahan: Oh, for sure.

Lee Burgess: They're giving you time to noodle and edit and research and think. I remember the couple 24-hour type take-homes I did. The questions were sophisticated,



you were basically writing a paper, you weren't writing an exam. It didn't feel like an exam answer. It felt like a paper, a timed paper, which I think is very different than what most people would expect from an issues spotter.

Alison Monahan: Right. I'm thinking about the Civ Pro one I had, because it was completely like that. It was a very ambiguous question, it was extremely difficult, and compared to an average in-class Civ Pro exam where it's going to be like, "Here's a question about personal jurisdiction, write about it", these are going to be more difficult. It's going to be the more subtle points that you might've covered. Obviously, you still need to know the basic law, you need to know the rules and the elements and have all that very structured for yourself. But it's probably going to require you to go deeper. Even if it's pass/fail, I was going to say they have to curve it some way, but a lot of places that won't be actually the case. But your professors still want to see that you really can engage with this material and that you understand it.

Lee Burgess: I think the professors are also going to assume that your writing is going to be so much cleaner. You're going to need to include – I think we're going to get into this in a bit – but you have to really realize that they're expecting a different presentation than the racehorse test, where typos are kind of acceptable and maybe a missing word here or there, or you're not including case names. All of those kinds of allowances that many law students are used to go out the window when you have an open book, longer time to do these questions, because professors are hoping they're going to be much easier to read.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. If it's still three or four hours, whatever, it's probably going to be sit down, do your brain dump, hopefully do an [outline](#) of some type. But if you have eight hours or even 24 or more, they're definitely going to be expecting a different quality of just presentation, as you say.

Lee Burgess: Mm-hmm. Yeah, so this in-depth knowledge really means that you need to be spending your study time really learning the rules element by element, and structuring your outline with those elements and practice, practice, practice, with some more practice, executing the analysis. Your analysis has to be flawless because there's no memorization element to it whatsoever. It's all about, can you do the question?

Alison Monahan: Yeah, all that time you would've spent memorizing is basically time you can be spending doing other things now. I think part of the issue here too though is if your professors have only given a certain type of in-class closed book exam and you have sample questions, those may or may not be that closely related to what they do in this new version. Of course you want to look at those and practice on them, but you may want to ask them, "How might you change this?" or, "Could you give us a sample question of what you think you might do this



time?" Maybe they do nothing different, but I think they're probably going to do some stuff differently.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, I think that that's true. If your professors are a little wishy-washy about this when you ask them for more details, I think it's important to realize that a lot of them are trying to change what they do, and professors typically don't like to change very quickly. And so, you may have to come back to them week after week and be like, "Have you thought any more about the format?" Try and be really kind, because I think that they are being put in a situation that is not where they're used to excelling, which is being flexible and accommodating lots of new situations. But you also want to continue to nudge them to make sure that they're going to give you information on what's supposed to happen.

Alison Monahan: Right. This is a team effort. We want to give you what you're looking for on this exam, but in order to do that, we need to know what your expectations are so we can prepare adequately.

Lee Burgess: Exactly.

Alison Monahan: One thing I think people sometimes really get caught off-track on here is they think, "Oh, I don't have to memorize these rules. I can just look everything up." That is a terrible idea.

Lee Burgess: Terrible.

Alison Monahan: Terrible. I had almost all open book exams, and I could still tell you about the law when I walked into that room. Even if it's an eight-hour exam or really even a 24-hour exam, you still need that knowledge in your head. It doesn't necessarily have to be word for word as it might be on a closed book exam, although you still want to be able to write this out quickly. People might hear eight hours and think, "Oh my gosh, that's so much time." It is not a lot of time. Even 24 hours is not a lot of time. You don't want to be wondering what these rules are, and more importantly, you can't spot issues if you don't understand the law. You need a granular knowledge of the law, so that you can read this question and that triggers something in your brain. If you don't have that information in your brain, you're going to be kind of dead in the water here.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. You can make outlines and you should probably make cheat sheets, like a one to two-page cheat sheet, but it's just making that material. I think that a lot of students can fall into the trap with an open book exam, which is, "Okay, I will make these materials and then I can reference them, and I'm good." No, you can make these materials and you must practice with them and you must really understand them and learn them and be able to test yourself finding rules quickly and making sure that they really speak to you. You can't just take somebody's outline that you think is very complete and put your name on it and



decide that you're ready for an open book exam. I know there are going to be people in law school who are going to think that that's the answer, and unfortunately, that is not going to serve most people well.

Alison Monahan: No. I've done that one, where it's like, "Oh, I'm good. I just have this 100-page outline that somebody else wrote in a class that I'm basically totally floundering in. I'll be good." Yeah, not a great plan. Even if you do start with someone else's outline, you need to make sure that you understand that, that you've made it your own. Are you taking it and condensing it down so that you have a cheat sheet in front of you? Are you making flow charts so that you can just ask yourself "Yes or No" questions? There are ways to use other people's materials very effectively, and maybe you're in a situation timewise where that absolutely makes sense and I totally respect that, but you have to make it your own.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. Just having outlines doesn't mean that you have a mastery of the material. The outline is just the starting point.

Alison Monahan: One time that ever worked for me, I had a 48-hour exam on EU Law, and I was not particularly interested in this class. And a friend of mine at a different school sent me the most amazing outline I had ever seen and I was like, "You know what? I'm a 3L. 48 hours, a perfect outline. I think I can do this." But that is an exception, not the rule.

Lee Burgess: Right.

Alison Monahan: And I got an A in that class.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. But I remember being kind of flummoxed... I think I was a 3L, and I was taking Employment Law and I was the number two editor in the Law Review. And the editor in chief in the Law Review, he had the high score of that class previously, and I asked him for his outline and he's like, "Oh sure." He sent it to me and I was feeling so good about myself because I had it outlined in my back pocket until I opened it up the day I was going to start using it, and I could barely follow it. He is a brilliant person, he's a great lawyer, but it had no formatting, it was very stream of consciousness. It did not work for me. And I kind of went, "Uh oh." I could go Control+F to look up keywords and see what he wrote about certain things, but it was not the way that I was going to be able to excel in that class. I could reference it, but I had to build my own materials. I think that that does tend to be more the rule than the exception. You've got to make the stuff speak for yourself and you really need to practice using these materials. I know that we've talked about in other [podcasts](#) the importance of taking longer outlines and tabbing them or making an index and making it a lot easier for you to reference it while you're practicing, because you want to get used to using those materials so the exam isn't the first time you're looking through them.



Alison Monahan: Yeah, I think this is a situation where you definitely want to start thinking really early about what you want to have in front of you when you're taking this exam. Like you said, you can start with a long outline, you can start with a commercial outline – doesn't really matter. You can make your own, do whatever, but you almost certainly want to have that one to two-page cheat sheet where it's like... Say we're doing Torts – here is my overview of Torts. I've got intentional torts, I've got negligence, I've maybe got some other things. It fits on a couple of pages and it's in front of you so that when you're reading that question, you're thinking, "Oh, should I be looking for intentional torts? Why yes, perhaps I should. Should I be looking for negligence? Probably." So that you don't really overlook something. Say it's a multi-part question and you think it's all about negligence, but actually half of it's about intentional torts. You want to make sure that you really got something in front of you that's going to trigger you to think about these things that you need to consider.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, and I remember taking open book exams in law school that were in the room, but were that three to four-hour structure. And often times I never even really dug into my full-length outline. I pretty much took the exam just off the cheat sheets.

Alison Monahan: Which is what you should do. That's the goal.

Lee Burgess: Right. But even if it's a longer take-home, I think you want to have that level of comfort with the material of, "I really could probably do this mostly from the cheat sheets, and I'm only referencing and diving down for more sophisticated issues where I need to do additional research."

Alison Monahan: Yeah, when I would go into an open book exam, I would basically have my one to two-page cheat sheet. I would have a longer outline that was not my own because I didn't make outlines really, I made flow charts. And I would, like you said, tab that up, have an index, have a table of contents. I'd practice using it so if I did need to look something up, I knew how to find it. And then I would have the flowcharts that I'd made. And so, my process was essentially if I was freaking out, look at the cheat sheet. Okay, what zone are we in? Alright, where's the flowchart on that? Great. Okay, pull out that flowchart. Put it in front of me, make a pre-writing outline where I've got the elements of the rule, I've got the facts that I want to talk about, or the arguments, because your professor is looking for a really logical structure. They're not looking for just like, "I saw this issue and here's what I have to say about it." They're looking for you to do this in a structured way, because they know you have all the stuff in front of you.

Lee Burgess: Right, and that is why once you get these materials made, you have to practice with them, because you have to figure... If your school is even pass/fail, you want your answer to stand out in a good way. And it's going to do that with



better analysis, with clean structure, and with clean writing. You have IRAC-ing and headers and no typos, all of that kind of stuff, a level of professionalism. And you kind of have to practice all of that to be able to do that under these conditions, whatever the conditions are.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. Your professor's still probably going to know whose exam is which by the end, after they turn in their grades, even if it's pass/fail. And if somebody did a standout exam and that person goes to office hours, that professor's probably going to be like, "Wow, Lee did a really great job on that. Congratulations! I'm happy to write you a letter of recommendation or help you with a job", whatever it is." Even if it's pass/fail, you're still building those relationships. Obviously people have different demands at this point on their time, but I think anybody can go in and write a structured exam. That doesn't have to do with the knowledge or the time that you have. It's really just making those materials work for you, doing some practice with them, and then being really disciplined on the exam day to actually do this in a structured way.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. Alright, let's talk a little bit more about, as we get close to your exams and when the exam time comes, what are the logistics people need to be thinking about to pull this off? I think the first thing is they need a computer, right? And it needs to be stable and working, and probably have Internet.

Alison Monahan: Your school is going to tell you how they're going to do this, and then you want to make sure that you can comply with that. And if you can't for whatever reason, you need, again, to get in touch with someone absolutely as soon as possible and tell them what the problem is.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. We talk about this always – in all exam situations, you need to test any exam software that they might be using on your machine. Turn off your automatic updates and don't do anything to break the exam software, because it's a nightmare if it gets broken. So, if they are going to use some sort of exam software, make sure that you are testing it, you're running it on your machine, you're not doing automatic updates. Tell Microsoft to calm down, it can wait a week, and make sure that your computer's running well.

Alison Monahan: Right, because the other problem is you're not going to have any tech support if something goes wrong. There's not going to be a proctor in the room or anything like that. I would be curious to see how schools decide to handle that, if say, they're giving a four-hour take-home exam and then someone's [ExamSoft](#) software crashes for 20 minutes. I don't know. That's going to be fun. You might want to ask those questions in advance, like, "What should I do if this happens?"

Lee Burgess: Yeah. Hopefully they've got an FAQ, but if not, the best way to encourage them to have one is to ask those questions.



- Alison Monahan: Yeah. I think you just want to think about it. I know certainly I had situations, in-class exams, where ExamSoft crashed more than once. I think you did too. I mean, almost anyone probably did. So, you just want to make sure you know, "What am I supposed to do in this scenario? Do I immediately stop and pick up a pencil? Do I call someone? Do I set a timer? What do I do to make sure that you're not going to be penalized for that?"
- Lee Burgess: That's another interesting point, Alison, that some people do prefer still to handwrite out exams. If that is something that you've always done or that you feel that you need to do, then you need to talk to the school about what the logistics of that are going to be. Are they going to let you do that? Are they going to let you scan them and send them in? Again, you really have to think through the information that's coming from your school, and then talk early and often about what your individual needs are.
- Alison Monahan: Absolutely. I think these are definitely messages that you want to read as soon as you get them. This is not the sort of thing that your school sends out something about how they're doing exams and you put it in your inbox and say, "Oh, I'll read it on the weekend when I have time to deal with this." You want to read them immediately and make sure that there's nothing in there that is going to cause you problems.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah, exactly. I think one of the more challenging logistics for folks in the midst of COVID-19 is, where are you going to take this exam?
- Alison Monahan: Right.
- Lee Burgess: Because finding a place, if you have children or roommates at home...
- Alison Monahan: Pets, whatever.
- Lee Burgess: Dogs, pets, significant other. Are you going to be able to focus and take this test at home under the timed conditions? If you live near the school, is the school going to allow you any private options, any quiet options? Are they going to open up any rooms? We don't know, but if you're in an extreme situation or need something very specific for your accommodations – again, start talking to the school early so they... Everybody's flying by the seat of their pants. It's possible they haven't even thought of a lot of these individual situations.
- Alison Monahan: Oh, for sure. Again, it's possible they may be able to do something if you're like, "Hey, I cannot take this exam in my house because of X, Y and Z. Is there any way that I can take it in a classroom by myself?", or in the library or whatever. Maybe there's an option that that can happen.



- Lee Burgess: Yeah, maybe. You'll never know unless you ask. So you might as well start by talking to them.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, the other question I think people may have to entertain at some point is if your situation is so extreme that it's literally impossible, is there a way that you can postpone these and do them later?
- Lee Burgess: It's true. Yeah.
- Alison Monahan: If it gets to that point, it's like, "No, we cannot provide you another space", and you're like, "It is literally impossible" – then it's like, "Alright, we need to talk about what the options are."
- Lee Burgess: Yeah, because if you are providing 24-hour childcare, I don't know how you would do a 24-hour take-home. I mean, that would be a lot.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. Maybe you go to a hotel, I don't know. I think people just are going to have to think of a lot of different options. Maybe your kid goes and stays with someone else. It's like, we don't know. Maybe there are options, maybe there are not, but definitely talk to someone. I think you've got to think about picking it up and returning it. Is this going to be done virtually? This is more kind of the school's problem, but what if they do say... We used to have to go pick them up. Hopefully that wouldn't be happening, but again, people may have just not really thought about it, like, "Oh, you'll just pop by the school and get them." It's like, "Well, not if I just moved halfway across the country."
- Lee Burgess: Right, yep. Also, if it's a longer take-home, you also need to think about all your physical needs. Do you have enough food in the house, water, are you going to sleep? When are you going to sleep? You want to think through that schedule of the entirety of the time. So, if it's an eight-hour take-home, you do want to make sure you're eating throughout it, but you don't want to be maybe cooking. You want to instead focus on what you can have ready to go, pop in the microwave, or sandwiches premade. Or, are you going to take a walk in the middle of it to get some fresh air to clear your mind or do some yoga? I think there are lots of things that you want to have as options of whatever you need to maintain efficiency and effective exam writing, given the conditions.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, and I think this is particularly obviously an issue for the 24-hour ones. Here too, even these longer exams, my advice to people is you've got to really keep a close eye on your time. Twenty four hours sounds like a lot of time, but it can go really quickly. And you want to start writing earlier than you think. What I would not recommend people do is pick up the exam, read it, think about it for a while and then decide that they're going to go to sleep for eight hours. I think that is really probably not the best plan, because when you wake up that time is going to go really quickly. Depending on when you can pick up your exam, I



think typically you want to structure your time so that you have at least a draft written of every part of the question before you go to sleep. And I think you probably should sleep. There's no real reason to stay up 24 hours, it's probably not necessary. The exams are typically not designed for that to be necessary. I think often having a fresh eye in the morning can be good, but do not go and lay down and go to bed before you've actually written a draft, because I think that can be disastrous.

Lee Burgess: Yeah.

Alison Monahan: Oh, and my God, please back stuff up.

Lee Burgess: I know, backup, I was going to say the same thing. Use the Cloud, Dropbox is amazing. Use the Cloud.

Alison Monahan: Well, and print stuff. Say you're doing an exam. I don't think you would do a 24-hour exam in ExamSoft. That would be kind of silly, but maybe they do. But assuming that there's a way for you to print this off or save it, save drafts. Save a draft that you mark as 4:00 PM, and then save a different draft at 5:00 PM, and 6:00 PM, and then print some of those. We have heard of really horrible things happening when people did not have backups. You do not want to be in that worst case scenario. At least once an hour, save your work under a different file name, put it in Dropbox, and then at least every few hours, print it out.

Lee Burgess: Also, I think for these longer exams, make sure you have a buffer at the end to read it and proof it. If they give you 24 hours, they don't want it riddled with typos.

Alison Monahan: No.

Lee Burgess: They're not going to be okay with that. If a professor gives you an exam for 24 hours, it needs to feel like a paper.

Alison Monahan: Right. It needs feel like something you present as a young associate or someone working at a non-profit or for the government. This is something that you'd be giving to your boss, basically.

Lee Burgess: Right, yeah. So it needs to be at a higher level and you need to save time to do that, and you need to have a plan of how you're going to proofread. Everybody has proofreading tricks that work for them, but you need to make your proofreading plan so you can check that box and move on. But don't leave that to the last 30 minutes.



- Alison Monahan: No. And you also want to think about how you are going to turn this back in. Make sure that you've got time to save it and all that kind of stuff. You don't want to be over the time limit and then realizing that something happened. Just give yourself that breathing room. If you turn it in five minutes early, great.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah. I would err on the side of five minutes early, no matter what.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, for sure. Things happen.
- Lee Burgess: Things happen.
- Alison Monahan: What if that last version gets corrupted and you have to go back to the one right before it?
- Lee Burgess: Also, my Internet went down for like 10 minutes today.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. The Internet across the country is very sporadic at this point in certain areas. Again, allow for those things, and again, ask those questions: "What am I supposed to do if my Internet is down at the time I'm supposed to submit this? Who do I call?"
- Lee Burgess: Yeah. Right.
- Alison Monahan: So yeah, kind of nuts.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah, kind of nuts.
- Alison Monahan: If people are listening to this and they're like, "Oh, I don't need to worry about this, my school's moved to pass/fail. I'm sure I'll pass" – you still want to be sure that you're doing your best and that you pass. However, at the same time, these are crazy times and I feel like you really can't drive yourself too nuts trying to prepare for exams if you have other important stuff going on. So, cut yourself a break, but try not to totally dial it in because you want to make sure you're doing enough. The good news is, if you have a longer take-home and it's open book, a really good set of [attack plans](#) can actually get you a long way. If you focus on that in the limited time you have available, and then really focus on the exam, on presenting this in a way that is professional – you're probably going to be fine.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah, I agree. My final thoughts are on this, everybody's health and safety and what their family or network needs is everybody's priority right now. Law school is definitely still a priority and you want to be able to check the box on these exams because you don't want to fail, because that's going to be harder to explain on your transcript. Nobody's going to talk to you about these passes. We just want to make this work. If you do have extreme stuff going on, just reach



out to your school. I think people are being very compassionate that a lot of different people have various levels of stressors going on. I was flipping through Instagram the other day and a blogger I follow was lamenting that she'd spent three hours yesterday redoing her nails. And I wanted to scream, because I was like, "I can't believe you spent three hours doing your nails." But I do think that everybody's in a different situation and the schools are going to be compassionate, but you need to talk to them about it. Remember that these are extreme times and you're going to have to ask for what you need. I think there's a lot of times people aren't even sure where they're supposed to be offering people to help them be successful.

Alison Monahan: I think that's right. If you have questions about these exams, ask your professors. That's what they're there for. If you don't understand what their expectations are or you're just not sure about something, just ask them.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. We're all in this together, we're all navigating this new frontier together. We all got to talk about it and not make assumptions because we don't even know what everybody's thinking about. It's all so new.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. So, hopefully everybody gets it together. You're going to be fine. And then if you think for some reason that may not be happening or you have questions, just reach out to people early, and hopefully it all works out.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. Alright, well, with that, we are out of time. 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. 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 myself or Alison at lee@lawschooltoolbox.com or alison@lawschooltoolbox.com. Or you can always contact us via our website [contact form](#) at LawSchoolToolbox.com. We are doing podcasts based on what people are sending our way, so feel free to send us questions because that is giving us ideas for the content you guys are looking for and we're happy to answer your questions on the podcast. Thanks for listening everybody. Please stay safe, stay home, and we'll talk to you soon!

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