



- Lee Burgess: Welcome back to the Law School Toolbox podcast. Today, we are talking about Bluebooking. 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. Today, we're talking about getting comfortable with the [Bluebook](#) and citations. And this is important for any law student who's planning on doing legal writing, which is basically every law student, or anyone planning to work on a law journal. Well, first off, Lee, what is the Bluebook? And will every school use exactly the Bluebook?
- Lee Burgess: Well, every Law Review will definitely use the Bluebook, but you may also hear about [ALWD](#) citations, which is an alternative citation guide. But basically the Bluebook and ALWD, they are both guides to tell you how to cite legal resources, both when you're in practice and for law journals. But law journals always follow the Bluebook, and in the real world, they follow the Bluebook as well. So if you get introduced to ALWD at school, it's likely you will retire it for the Bluebook by the time that you are 2L. So, it's a little weird, but almost everyone's going to touch the Bluebook at some point in their legal career.
- Alison Monahan: Right, which is literally a book that is blue, and confusingly, it also has blue pages, which you typically use in practice, but also white pages, which you typically use for law journals. So, let that be your first introduction to just how confusing the Bluebook really can be.
- Lee Burgess: It's totally true. And the basic idea is, as you're writing anything that somebody else is going to read, you need to tell people reading your work where you got the information you're talking about and how they can find it if they want to read it. And if you're at a point in your legal career where you've done legal research, either by reading your own paper or reading other people's Law Review articles, you'll understand that if you were doing a deep dive into a topic, oftentimes you do go read the things that people are citing to. Or in practice, as Alison and I will both talk about how we used citations in Bluebooks and practice, you also have to look up what people are citing and make sure that they say what it's actually saying and things like that. It is actually a very practical thing that you need to be good at.
- Alison Monahan: Oh, absolutely. And it's also one of those things that employers, whoever they are, really expect you to be able to do. If you are the low person on the totem



pole, oftentimes your job will literally be to do the final cite check, to do the final corrections on the citations. You need to be able to do that with a certain degree of facility. So if you think this is just something that you're never going to use, that is absolutely not true. And it's something you need to get good at, because if your employer expects you to do it and you can't, that's kind of a disaster.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. So Alison, your first job out of law school was to clerk. So did you use your Bluebooking skills in the courts?

Alison Monahan: Oh well, we definitely used legal citations a lot. I'm sure in opinions, probably, we cited stuff, I'm guessing. We must have.

Lee Burgess: I don't know, most legal opinions I read, they have some citation's in them, so I'm sure.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, I'm pretty sure we had citations. I would say actually, in terms of citations, I spent more of my time actually looking them up in the documents we received than I did personally adding them. Obviously, if I was writing something for the judge, I would add citations, and he expects them to be right. But it was actually really astonishing sometimes, what people thought they could get away with. I remember one instance where someone had cited a case, and it was frankly for a silly proposition, it wasn't even a particularly important case. And there are rules in the Bluebook about how you do edits, with dot, dot, dot, and brackets, you can remove things, whatever. But I went and looked up the actual case, and they had edited out a "not".

Lee Burgess: Oh. That's a key word, usually.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, you're like, "That's not the type of edit we're talking about. This case does not stand for what you think it stands for, and you know that." It was like, "Whoopsie!" People sometimes think this stuff doesn't matter and you can just kind of do whatever you want, but let me tell you, when you find that as a law clerk, and then you tell the judge, "Hey, FYI" – that's probably not a hearing that's going to go very well for you as a lawyer.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. And it's funny, I had a similar experience when I was a first-year associate in BigLaw. We were a corporate defense firm, and so the plaintiff-side counsel had just been filing motions in limine, like a stack of them, about all the things you could imagine. I got the least important stack, basically, with the directions of "Respond to them", and I was like, "Okay." But when I started checking the cases and checking their quotes, there were mistakes all over them. And then it became this weird "I'm going to find all your mistakes" game. I guess it was still that I hadn't been too far out of my editing in the Law Review phase, because it became this weird game. I would look at the cases, and I loved finding when



they'd screw up quotes, and then I got to stand on my soapbox, as I was writing my response, to pick apart the fact that their work wasn't particularly well done. And it was really interesting to me, and a little eye-opening at how much sloppy work can be done. And if you can come to your job with some solid skills in this department and an appreciation for how important this accuracy is, it can really make you stand out as you start your career.

Alison Monahan: I think that's absolutely right. People think this sort of thing is just trivial, it doesn't matter, but anyone who's become a judge or a law firm partner or any of these things that you're submitting work to, probably has some idea of what this should look like. And if it doesn't look right, then that just really can destroy your credibility fairly quickly, even if you're not trying to completely change the meaning of the case. You just need this stuff to look professional, and I think that's a really key part of this, is just, yes, it's tedious, and yes, it's boring sometimes, but you need to get good at it, because otherwise, people are not going to take your work seriously.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. So we were also both on a Law Review.

Alison Monahan: Ugh. Some of us more willingly.

Lee Burgess: I know you loved your Law Review experience so much.

Alison Monahan: Law Review was not my favorite activity. I found it pretty tedious, let's be honest.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. I was a little more all-in, and I was one of the editors my third year. But we both spent a lot of time working on editing legal citations there too, and I think the Law Review is really Bluebook boot camp, because that is your job. You are reading and editing so many rounds of citations and checking sources, that if you go through that experience of being on a journal in law school, even if it's not a Law Review journal, a lot of this stuff is going to become second nature.

Alison Monahan: Right. I definitely did not learn, really, to Bluebook properly until I was thrown into it as a 2L and just handed stacks and stacks and stacks of pages of things that I had to go through. And someone else was checking them later, at least in the beginning, and so it made me get much better. Certainly, after writing just one legal writing assignment or two, and then a moot court brief – which is basically all the legal writing really seriously done that first year – I was not particularly fluent with the Bluebook, but I was after a few months on the Law Review.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. It was interesting, we were helping some students with some Bluebooking recently, and it has been, let's say, a few years since you and I were doing a lot



of Bluebooking. And it was funny because I could still look at it and know that something was wrong, but I didn't remember the rules to fix it.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, exactly. Yeah, you told me something like, "That doesn't quite look right."

Lee Burgess: I know.

Alison Monahan: "What's the problem?" "I can't tell you what the problem is, I can just tell you it doesn't look right." So that sixth sense of, "Something seems off here", is really what you develop when you do this a lot.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. But then it also is interesting, because your supervising attorneys are going to have a similar reaction, depending on how their practices or how they are doing their writing and things like that. But it's also important to remember that even the people who don't do this all the time, if you invested a lot of time and did develop these skills, you don't completely lose them. They still are rattling around in there, in your brain somewhere.

Alison Monahan: Right, and I will definitely say I had situations working in a law firm where literally every person on the team, from the summer intern up to the partner, everyone was doing cite checking on that last few hours. Even the partners were diving in and getting this stuff done, because someone had to do it.

Lee Burgess: And it's important.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, it needs to be right.

Lee Burgess: It needs to be right.

Alison Monahan: Judges don't like it if it's not right. They don't like that.

Lee Burgess: No. And clients don't want to hear that their lawyers screwed up their citations, their briefs.

Alison Monahan: No, definitely not.

Lee Burgess: Not for what they're paying for.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. Basically, this is one of those things that pretty much does need to be as perfect as possible.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. So, when a lot of people get their first Bluebook... There is also an online version, but I still do the paper version, we're going to talk about that later. But a lot of people find it very intimidating. So, Alison, why do you think the Bluebook is so intimidating for people when they get started?



Alison Monahan: Well, I think, number one, there are just so many rules, and frankly, most of these rules you're never going to use. I would say you probably use routinely, say, 10% to 20% of the rules in the book, and then...

Lee Burgess: Probably.

Alison Monahan: There are probably another 50% that you literally never look at. So, sometimes people think they have to sit down and kind of memorize this book, and that's just not really the way this works. The rules themselves can also be confusing when you first get started, because you're just like, "What in the world?" There's a lot of cross-referencing, you might have one rule that refers to a different rule that then refers to a table. The thing is, all of this gets easier with practice. So, when you have that physical book, you learn pretty quickly, "Hey, maybe I want to tab table six", or whatever it is that you use all the time. So it does get easier as you practice.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. And I think you just have to be willing to kind of dive in. I think that one of the things about the practice is if you just try and use it once for one paper, that's not going to make it easy to really learn the Bluebook. If you're going to do some sort of journal, and I think that even if you don't want to be on the Law Review, some sort of journal, moot court, something where you have to write and cite and source check extensively is really good, almost like a boot camp, or practicing, if you're planning on practicing with any sort of litigation element to it that requires court filings, as you're going to have to cite things. These are skills that you want to work on, and you almost want to commit to working on them, because I think everybody expects you to have them.

Alison Monahan: Right. I think it's also useful to think of it as sort of two different parts. One is the case where you're writing a paper and you have to do your citations. You start from scratch, you figure it out. In some ways, I think that's actually easier than having to cite check someone else's work. So one of the good things about a journal is it's actually similar to what you would probably be doing in practice, is that you didn't necessarily create these citations from scratch. So if I created something from scratch, I personally have a pretty good system where I'm not going to screw things up that much. But if someone hands me a page of stuff I've never seen and someone else has written in, maybe they don't have that system, I actually have to develop a different skill set to be able to go through that and make those accurate.

Lee Burgess: That's a very good point.

Alison Monahan: So you want to try to do both, basically, in school.



- Lee Burgess: Yeah. Alright, we wanted to cover a few Bluebook basics for folks who might be feeling a little intimidated by taking on their first experience with the Bluebook. So, as we already kind of mentioned, the Bluebook does have some organization to it. The beginning of the Bluebook are these quick reference pages, which you were mentioning that they're such a small percentage of the rules that you look at constantly, and I think that the quick reference pages cover a lot of those rules. I think that's a good place to start – cases, statutes, quick things, periodicals, Law Review articles. You're still going to have to look at these tables we're going to talk about in a few minutes, but that's always a great place to look first, especially as you get more comfortable with the rules. Then you've got the blue pages, which are really for practitioners. If you're in law school, and especially if you're working for any sort of law journal, you do not want to reference those pages. You have white pages, which are for law reviews. That is what you're going to focus on if you're doing any sort of Law Review work, and really, that's what most people want you to use for any sort of academic papers in law school as well; they want you to focus on those white pages. Now, there are also these tables at the end, that seem like they shouldn't be that important, but they are incredibly important. You will really use these tables the most, because it tells you how to abbreviate case names and other commonly used words, it tells you what reporters to use for every state, how to find a citation for state statutes. You really kind of do a deep dive, it's like Table 6, Table 10. You typically want to tab those and know what are in those tables, so you can quickly reference them. And then if you can't remember where anything is organized, of course, there's an index. And if you're on the online version, you can just use the search functionality instead of an index, which is a little bit handy about the online version. So Alison, have you gotten a chance to really play with the online version of the Bluebook?
- Alison Monahan: I'll be honest, I really haven't. I think you've spent more time with it than I have.
- Lee Burgess: I did, I couldn't remember if I'd dragged you into that.
- Alison Monahan: No, I think I was more like, "Hmm, I know that exists. Right, okay, yeah."
- Lee Burgess: So, the online version didn't exist back in the day. I have tried to use both, and if you have access to the online version and the paper version, I think it's nice to use both of them, but it's also nice to think about what's easier to use for the type of work that you're doing – whether, like you said, if you're creating your own citations or doing citation checking. I, personally, am a big fan of tabbing the Bluebooks with little plastic tabs so you can quickly flip through it to find those commonly used rules and tables. The other thing that I really like about the book is that you can scan all the examples, which is somehow how you get your questions answered, your very nuanced questions, is you're kind of looking for an example in these rules that looks a lot like whatever you're trying to cite or cite check to. And I think that I'm just not as good of a skimmer on the



computer. For some reason, I find it just easier to have the book there, to use my finger to kind of go through and look for those examples. The content's the same, it's just presented in a different way. The online functionality does have something interesting, because they have this pin technology. At the bottom right-hand of the window, they've got a little push pin, and you can pin a rule to have it show up in a pin guide. What's kind of interesting about this is, you could almost make your own kind of quick citation guide. So if you are doing, let's say, a paper that was full of statutes from a certain state or a certain kind of international treaty, you could pin the rules that you're going to use constantly and find them very quickly. I thought that was a kind of cool functionality, and may be faster for some people. I also thought that the search functionality is nice if you wanted to be able to search for something very specific. But all in all, I still have to prefer the paper version. I think it's good to have both, but I think the paper version still has a lot to offer.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, I think they have kind of different pros and cons, and it's just a question of probably mixing and mashing and figuring out what's going to work best. They're not super expensive; you can have both.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, I'm sure the school will help you get access to both.

Alison Monahan: Exactly. I'm assuming you probably can access both of them pretty easily.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. Now, one of the things that we were reminded the last time I kind of circled back to doing Bluebook work was that you also need to think about your computer and all sorts of keyboard shortcuts that you can use to make citation work easier. And I think pretty much any law student is going to need to do this at some point in their career; it's going to make it so much easier.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, definitely. You think, "Oh, I don't need whatever", but then there are all these little specific things. You need your... What do you call that little squiggly, S-looking thing?

Lee Burgess: I think it's a section.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, the section. I don't even know what it's called, but obviously use it all the time. Or the backwards P, or the m-dash. The other thing people need to set up somehow is shortcuts for small caps, because you actually use that quite a lot in citing things like books and Law Review articles. So whatever your computer needs to be able to do to do that, you've kind of got to figure that out.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. And I did go ahead and pull these for what they currently are, for Mac and PC, so if you want to look them up in the transcript later, if you're listening in your car, you can do that. So on a Mac, the shortcut for small caps is Command + Shift + K, and for PC, it's Shift + F3. So, check to see if those work on your



machine; if not, you can manually set up shortcuts, and that will make it easier to do some of this stuff than going to "Font" and clicking all these boxes. That just gets old when you're doing a lot of this work.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, definitely. You want to be able to put in the section symbol without having to go into your characters. You just want to be like "Control + S" or whatever you set it up as.

Lee Burgess: Yep, exactly. So, if you were starting to familiarize yourself with the Bluebook, or you're trying to do maybe some pre-work before a Law Review write-on, or anything that you need to do that includes Bluebook work, I think it's really important to start with the five most common citations that you're likely going to see. These are cases, statutes, Law Review articles, periodicals, books, and Internet citations. And Internet citations can be so many things, that's a pretty big bucket, but that can be PDFs on the Internet, webpages, news articles. But so often now, stuff is on the Internet that we're researching, and so getting comfortable with how you represent that in a legal citation is very important.

Alison Monahan: Definitely. And with all these, you want to make sure you know both the full citations and the short cites, which are basically the shortened citations that are available to you in specific circumstances – once a full citation is included for a certain period of time – as you would guess, there are rules around all of this. And also, people should understand things like the id and the supra and all these kinds of things. And it may matter whether you're in the text or in the footnotes; these are all things to pay attention to.

Lee Burgess: Yep. So, as you practice more and more, you're going to start noticing that there are common things that are missing in citations if you're practicing editing, or that there are common mistakes that you will make as well. But some of the things you always want to watch out for is – sounds so simple, but every citation ends with a period at the end of the footnote.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, which I kind of forgot about. I was like, "Wait, why are all these periods everywhere?"

Lee Burgess: I know.

Alison Monahan: I'm like, "Right, because they have to be."

Lee Burgess: Because they have to be. It's one of those things, you always want to look for those periods. The other thing that's very easy to screw up are that commas are in the right places. Commas are very important in citations. Almost think of it as an address. It's usually like Los Angeles, comma, California, because you want to separate those two things. Does Washington, DC have a comma? I don't know, some people might have to look it up. Commas are very powerful in the citation



and how it's broken up, and so you have to watch where those commas are and make sure that they're in the right places.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, definitely. It is funny, don't you think, that in an address, you put a comma between the city and the state, and then the zip code just goes straight in there.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, but I think that's because the zip code's a number. There's no confusion about whether the zip code and the state are connected to each other.

Alison Monahan: Makes sense.

Lee Burgess: I think if the zip code had letters in it, then maybe it would have a comma.

Alison Monahan: Who knows?

Lee Burgess: I don't know, but why do we do a comma between... I guess the reason we do like April 29th, comma, 2020...

Alison Monahan: Numbers.

Lee Burgess: ...is because they're all numbers. But in Europe, when they do 29 April 2020, they don't, because they're all separated.

Alison Monahan: Can't be confused. Yeah.

Lee Burgess: Yep. Things you don't think about very often.

Alison Monahan: Exactly. And there are probably rules around all these. Other common things you see, URLs are not generally going to be hyperlinks.

Lee Burgess: And Word makes this so painful, because they always make everything a hyperlink.

Alison Monahan: So if it puts it in as a hyperlink, you have to take it out, you have to take out the formatting. It can't be blue, it can't be underlined, all these things. The small caps, I don't understand why we use small caps, but hey, it's the Bluebook. If it needs to be in small caps, it needs to be in small caps.

Lee Burgess: I think after my time in the Law Review, I think I did my resume in small caps, like my name at the top of my resume.

Alison Monahan: Oh, I think I might have too. I thought it looked very elegant or something. Now, I'm just like, "What was I doing?"

Lee Burgess: I think that was a super geeky Law Review thing to do.



- Alison Monahan: I like small caps, I'm just really unclear on why we still use them. I'm not sure what value they add to anything.
- Lee Burgess: No, but I'm pretty sure I got kind of obsessed with them after the Law Review. I don't think we use them anymore, but... Nothing we ever work on has small caps in it anymore.
- Alison Monahan: No, they're totally antiquated. Then you look at the Bluebook, and it's all over the place.
- Lee Burgess: Maybe we should bring back the small caps. We can look at that for our next round of styles that we focus on. I think the other thing – and I am terrible about this – is making sure all parentheticals that are opened are closed at the end. This can get really tricky.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, I never mess that up, because I was a programmer.
- Lee Burgess: Oh yes. Well, see, I was a terrible programmer too!
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, no, that'll break your entire code.
- Lee Burgess: I know, I know. Back in the day, when I was a consultant, they sent me to coding camp, outside of Chicago. I was an Organizational Psychology major, so I was supposed to tell people how to implement code into their workplace and implement systems, but they thought everybody needed a basic understanding of code. So they would always take someone who was like me and match me with somebody who was a CS major, so we'd be on these teams, and the trick was to teach the CS major patience to teach me to code, and then it was for me to try and learn from the CS major. So we were coding some sort of website with a shopping cart, that's all I remember, and we were each supposed to do it in parallel. And my code was, literally, broken beyond belief. And at one point, I just tapped his shoulder and I was like, "My code is broken, and I don't know why." And so he takes my laptop, and he scans the code, and he looks down and he's like, "Will you go get me more Diet Coke? This is going to take a while." And he goes, "Please stop writing. It's going to be harder to fix your code than it will just be to write new code." And I was like, "Sounds good, sounds good." So I was just snack delivery and Diet Coke delivery, and then I've never really coded since then.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, well, had you done that, you would've gotten really obsessive about paying attention to how many opening parentheticals you have and how many you need to close. And this can get very confusing, because a lot of these citations, you may have multiple sets of them, and you really do have to make sure they're all closed.



- Lee Burgess: Yeah. Sometimes you'll have three or four in a row. It's really...
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, you have to count.
- Lee Burgess: You have to count! So it is something that oftentimes, unless you are a programmer, you don't focus on, and you have to create new habits.
- Alison Monahan: Right, exactly. You can go through with different colored highlighters and mark off each one to make sure they match, all that kind of stuff. There are techniques you can use, Lee, I know you'll be surprised, to make your code work, or make your Law Review article perfect.
- Lee Burgess: I gave up on the coding, I just gave up. I was like, "You didn't hire me to code. I don't know why I'm here."
- Alison Monahan: Well, after you spend two hours tracking down one bracket that didn't get closed, you start paying attention to these things.
- Lee Burgess: It's true, it's true. Although, I did see their point, that if we were going to work on these teams, we had to have a basic understanding of how code was built. And to be fair, that knowledge, the basic understanding and knowledge, did come into play sometimes. But they didn't pay me to code.
- Alison Monahan: Probably a good thing.
- Lee Burgess: They sent me to meetings with coders to tell them what to tell the clients.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. Well, I think the key point here, whether it's coding or citations, is the more you do this, the better you will get. And frankly, some of this really is about developing processes.
- Lee Burgess: That's true, that's true. And making sure that common mistakes don't bring you down.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. One thing we've seen is people will even have a list of common things that are problems for them and globally. And before you submit this document, you go through, and you make sure like, "Okay, what do I tend to mess up?", because we all have things we tend to mess up.
- Lee Burgess: That's true, yeah.
- Alison Monahan: You need to check that. If you're doing your own citation, say, for a paper, we highly recommend that you start a master citation document. This is basically a way to keep all of your citations or all of your sources at easy reach. So, you



probably want to have a full cite, you probably want to have a short cite, you make sure these are perfect, and then you can copy and paste them as you need them.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, this is really life-changing when you do a big paper, because you don't want to be typing in citations over and over.

Alison Monahan: Oh no, definitely do not do that.

Lee Burgess: No, no, no, do not do that. This is where copy and paste is your best friend. But that master document has to be 100% perfect. And so you do need to spend a lot of time making sure that those citations are exactly perfect.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. The other thing that can be helpful for people is, when you're writing, to only include full citations until you're completely finished with your drafting. And the reason for this is that you can only use short citations, which are the truncated versions in certain cases. And so, if you reorganize things, you don't want to end in a situation where you have the short cite before the full cite or something like that, because that's going to make a mess. Your footnote numbers might change. If you're citing to case whatever at footnote three, and now it's footnote five – this stuff can get a real mess.

Lee Burgess: Yes. So I think, what you want to remember is that now, which may be slightly different than even some of your earlier work in law school, there needs to be a whole process for finishing the footnotes and proofing the footnotes to make sure that they are cited correctly. So, if you can use these full cites to begin with, then you have this opportunity to do this cleanup process at the end, which is just going to be so much easier than fixing problems once you're still editing the body of the document.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. And I will caution people not to do stuff like this with a huge "Find and Replace" at the last minute. I remember my moot court partner did that, and I got an email from him at literally 4:00 in the morning or something. He was like, "Oh my God, do you have an older version of my document? I've just find and replaced the wrong thing, and now everything's totally screwed up." And I was like, "Are you kidding me?" But that happened. You've got to be careful.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. Got to be careful. It's important to also keep in mind that if you are on a Law Review or any law journal, that you're likely going to get trained in the Bluebook by your school or by the journal. But it's also important to note that most Law Reviews are going to have their own style guides.

Alison Monahan: Ooh, fun! What's that, Lee?



- Lee Burgess: I know. Well, if it wasn't enough to have an entire book with rules, each individual journal can create additional rules, and they can actually choose to opt out of some Bluebook rules, which is also very annoying and interesting. But this could either change some of the rules from the Bluebook or clarify how to handle common issues that constantly come up. And typically, style guides will override the Bluebook. So, if you do have a style guide from your school, you want to know it well. And if any rules contradict the Bluebook, I would recommend to take your physical Bluebook and write in notes to yourself, either with the updates from the style guide or referencing the style guide, so you can always refer back to it. That's one of the nice things about the paper Bluebook, because you can actually edit it on the page.
- Alison Monahan: Right. Fun fact: You may not know this, but the Law Review I was on, we actually helped write the Bluebook.
- Lee Burgess: Ooh, aren't you fancy?
- Alison Monahan: Well, I just recall these enormous arguments that people were having between... It wasn't even just between a person and one of the... It was between schools, at some point, over what the Bluebook should contain, or if an example was correct. It was pretty insane, I will be honest.
- Lee Burgess: Isn't it Harvard, Yale, and Columbia?
- Alison Monahan: It's some consortium of...
- Lee Burgess: Consortium? Yeah.
- Alison Monahan: I don't remember exactly who was in it, but it's something like that. And every 10 years they do an edit, and it happened to be when I was on the Law Review that we were having to do this ridiculous edit. So we were editing pages of the Bluebook for our Bluebooking assignments.
- Lee Burgess: That's a lot.
- Alison Monahan: It was really meta, I would say.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah, and they just did an overhaul of the Bluebook a couple of years ago, which was interesting. Okay, well, if you are struggling with understanding the Bluebook or figuring out a process to do these writing assignments, you're always welcome to reach out because, believe it or not, maybe not shocking, some of the tutors in our team, we all loved us some Bluebooking. Someone – I won't name her here – has a T-shirt, a Bluebooking T-shirt.
- Alison Monahan: Wow.



Lee Burgess: Yes.

Alison Monahan: I'm not even sure I've seen that.

Lee Burgess: Yep. We've got former technical editors, we've got people with T-shirts. Come on over. Come on over.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, people can help.

Lee Burgess: We're going to have to talk about it. I don't have a T-shirt.

Alison Monahan: Nor do I.

Lee Burgess: But hey, never say never. You just never know. Anyway, you can always reach out to us and we're happy to help you get more comfortable with your Bluebooking. Any final thoughts on citations or Bluebooking, Alison, before we wrap up?

Alison Monahan: No, I think I would just mostly say, as a person who this does not seem naturally interesting to, I think it's important to understand that this is actually a really important skill set, and it's something that you will use, and it's something that you really should take seriously, and it does get easier. I found it very painful, I'm not a detail-oriented person, and this is pretty much the definition of extremely detail-oriented. But you will get better at it, and it's worth investing some time and energy into.

Lee Burgess: Yep, and it just makes you so much more professional once you hit your career. It's just very important. It's part of how you present yourself anywhere.

Alison Monahan: Right. This is actually something you'll be expected to help with.

Lee Burgess: Yep, exactly.

Alison Monahan: And you need to be able to do that, because if you hire somebody who doesn't know anything, basically, and you're like, "Okay, well, at least you can check the citations and get that right", and then they can't do that. And you're like, "What use do you have?" It sounds harsh, but that is your utility.

Lee Burgess: It's true. And it is just about practice and getting comfortable with it, don't let it get too intimidating. When it all comes down to it, it's just rules. The Bluebook will tell you what to do.

Alison Monahan: Right, it's all there somewhere.



Lee Burgess:

It's all there somewhere. Okay, 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. Thanks for listening, and we'll talk soon!

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