



Alison Monahan: Welcome back to the Law School Toolbox podcast. Today, we're excited to have ex-BigLaw recruiter Sadie Jones here with us to talk about goals for your 1L summer job. Your Law School Toolbox host today is Alison Monahan, and typically, I'm with Lee Burgess. We're here to demystify the law school and early legal career experience, so that you'll be the best law student and lawyer you can be. Together, we're the co-creators of the [Law School Toolbox](#), the [Bar Exam Toolbox](#), and the career-related website [CareerDicta](#). I also run [The Girl's Guide to Law School](#). If you enjoy the show, please leave a review or rating on your favorite listening app. And if you have any questions, don't hesitate to reach out to us. You can always reach us via the [contact form](#) on LawSchoolToolBox.com, and we would love to hear from you. With that, let's get started.

Welcome back to the Law School Toolbox podcast. Today, we're excited to have ex-BigLaw recruiter Sadie Jones here with us to talk about goals for your 1L summer job. Welcome, Sadie.

Sadie Jones: Thanks for having me back.

Alison Monahan: My pleasure. Well, people sometimes get really hung up on the job they're looking for in this 1L summer. It has to be exactly what they want to do long-term, or their entire legal career is done. Is that the case?

Sadie Jones: Absolutely not. I think it's sort of the opposite. I consider the 1L summer sort of a freebie. So you need to have a job, but it's actually not super important what it is, and you want to get certain things out of it. But if you don't, it's not the end of the world. You need something on your resume for 1L year and people aren't going to analyze it in too much detail.

Alison Monahan: I think that's fair. People sometimes think, "Oh, if I don't get a BigLaw job, I'm never going to get a BigLaw job." That's just not really the way it works. I mean, hey, I had a BigLaw job in my 1L summer, it was great, but it didn't really have any bearing on what I did the next summer. Alright, well, if this doesn't have to be exactly what somebody wants to do long-term, what is even the point of it?

Sadie Jones: Well, I think there're a few goals that you can have going into it, and these are sort of my big picture goals, you can have your own goals of what you're looking for. But I think you just want to get some experience, especially if you've gone straight through and you don't have another job on your resume in an office, in a professional setting. So just getting that experience is great. And even if you have it from before, most likely it's not in a legal setting, so I think that can be really valuable to get that. And I think that you want to make connections and you want to have people in your corner, maybe to be a reference later on or connect you to other people, so you want to sort of make those relationships. And I think you want to gain some legal skills, some writing skills, the most that



you can out of it. And there's a range, not everyone's going to get the same level of substantive experience, but you want to get as much as possible.

Alison Monahan: I agree with all that. I think this is a great foyer into the legal profession. It might be your first time being in a professional office environment and doing your work, all of these things. I guess people will probably be in the office this summer, we don't really know, but most likely. And you just want to dive into it and maybe explore something that you're interested in, but maybe you're not sure if you want to do, or that just seems like an interesting experience. So on that note, what type of jobs are really most realistic to get for this 1L summer?

Sadie Jones: First, I want to say that most likely they will not be paid. You may get paid, but you should not go into it assuming that you're going to get paid, because often 1L jobs are not. So we're really just looking at what are the most common, hire a lot of 1Ls kind of experiences. And again, you're just trying to get experience, you're not going to get usually an offer to come back the following summer. It's kind of a one-off thing. So working for a judge, I always think is great, and I see that a lot, and I think it's pretty standard, but I think ticks all the boxes that we just talked about. Along those lines, government work, working for a PD's office, the DA's office, or whatever they call it in your city, that kind of thing. Public interest work. I probably would go that path more if that's the direction you want to go, so you might want to think about that a little bit. You can do a public interest job if you want to go into the private sector, but sometimes it tells a story, so I would think about that particular area. BigLaw is obviously great and it's sort of a freebie, and then you can go back for part of your second summer and also check out another BigLaw firm. In a lot of ways, that's sort of the ultimate. But there are very few BigLaw jobs for 1Ls, so it's just unrealistic. I think a smaller law firm is a possibility. I would probably pick one of the things I just mentioned over that if I had the option of either/or. And then I think you could work for a professor, and that could be lower down on the list if you're just not finding anything. Those kinds of things, that's usually where it works out. And then we've talked about before that there are some more in-house opportunities. I think it's probably less likely than all the other things that we say, but that is a possibility.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, I agree with all that. I think your point to public interest is a good one, that if you are thinking long-term career goals in public interest, I do think it makes sense to try to do a 1L summer job in at least a vague area that you might be interested in. But I would say outside of that, it really doesn't matter so much.

Sadie Jones: Exactly. And it's the one area where I think it can tell the wrong story if you're looking to go into the private sector, especially if you've done it before. So, if you have sort of a path where you've done public interest work previously, before law school, or volunteered or things like that, then it becomes trying to explain to them, "That's not really what I want to do." So just think about that.



- Alison Monahan: That's true, you definitely have to be sort of careful about the story you're going to be telling. One thing about working for a judge people should just be aware of is, some judges will never hire someone who worked for them in the summer, and others are happy to do it. So, if you think you're going to clerk later, and this is your perfect judge to work for in your clerkship, it's probably something just to find out about, is this a person who might hire you again? I'm pretty sure the judge I worked for wouldn't hire people because he thought they'd already had the experience, but then I had other friends who worked their 1L summer for fantastic judges and then immediately got clerkships with them. So it just kind of depends.
- Sadie Jones: Definitely. And I think that's something where you can kind of ask around what they've heard about this person. But I would say the judge, government, DA, that kind of job, to me is interchangeable later on for anything else you want to do. They're very standard 1L jobs, and you can go public interest, private sector, you can kind of do whatever you want after. That'll translate and you won't really have to explain anything. It makes sense.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, definitely. And if a large part of this summer job is really around skill development, what type of things should people be looking to do over the summer, and how should that factor into what job they take?
- Sadie Jones: Well, I would say you want to get as much hands-on experience as you can. That being said, that may not happen. The 1Ls are definitely getting probably the most menial tasks and things like that, but I would say go into it being like, "I want to get experience." So, whether that means you get client interaction, definitely writing I think is really important, and you want to work on those skills. So I would say as much hands-on, getting to maybe go to court, that kind of thing I think would all be great. And basically, I would just say go in, making it clear that you're ready to go, and even though you don't have much experience, you really want to learn and you want to be there as much as possible.
- Alison Monahan: I think that's true. A lot of jobs, they will give you opportunities to sort of shadow even if you're not doing the work yourself. So I think that's one of the reasons that working for a judge can be really great. I clerked for a judge in the District Court, and there are a couple of different things that you do in that job. One of them is, obviously, you're doing research, you're writing, you're doing your legal analysis. But a lot of the benefit of the job, I think, really ends up being in the time that you're sitting in court. So, we would be in court and if we had an intern, they would be there with us, and that gives you the opportunity to really observe what's going on and you start to understand, "This is what a motion hearing is, this is what happens", which is stuff that you never see in law school. Even if you're not specifically doing something at that moment, it's a really good way to see how these things work.



Sadie Jones: I agree, and I think that goes back to the whole idea of, this is a freebie summer, really. And so, just getting to see things and experience things and see what's going on is going to be great. I don't think it has to be as much about doing it during the 1L summer as it is probably during the 2L summer.

Alison Monahan: Right. Lee talks about, I think she worked for the U.S. Attorney's Office or something when she was a 1L, and she actually got to go into court and argue misdemeanor cases, because they had something where they could get qualified to do that. And so, that's a pretty intimidating experience, but it's also a great experience to have.

Sadie Jones: And I think if you're the kind of person who makes it clear they want to do that and actually does it, that stands out. They're going to remember you in that class of people or whatever, that you're someone who wanted to do things and wasn't just standing back.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, and I think one thing that's fair to ask about when you're considering what job to take is around training. Do you have any thoughts on that?

Sadie Jones: Yeah. I think kind of asking how it works, what their program is, is this something they do every year, because I always think it's kind of risky if they don't usually take on 1Ls or law students or junior lawyers. Then you know you're getting into a situation where there's no probably setup for it. And also asking them, do they work with junior attorneys, do they work with summer associates? Maybe do they have a mentor program, is there someone who's going to be assigned to you to show you how it works?

Alison Monahan: Yeah, I agree. I think sometimes it's almost better to just slot yourself into a pre-existing program that someone has actually spent time and energy thinking about and honing over the years. That's why we mentioned the DA or public defenders. These are places that are used to kind of slotting people in for the summer. Obviously, firms do this, they have a process. Sometimes people want to get super creative and create their own experience, which is fine, but you just have to understand that you may not really be getting the focused attention and structured training that you would be getting in a more established program.

Sadie Jones: And that's my concern about students that are looking at boutique law firms, really small law firms, like, "Oh, I have a family friend who says they'll take me on." I always say, "But what is that going to be like? Have they ever done this before? Is it like one other attorney and they just think you're going to jump in?" Because then I think, "I don't know how much you're going to get out of it." And so, if you have another option that might be better, go with that. And just because you want to work in a law firm down the road doesn't mean that's



what you need to do 1L year. That is exactly why I'd be wary of the small law firm situation.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, I think obviously in some cases it can work out, but I think you have to think about who's going to be managing you, have they ever managed anyone before, do they have a clear understanding of what your skill level is, and that you're probably not just going to be thrown in to start writing a brief? You haven't done that much, you've only gone to one year of law school. So I think people just have to be realistic.

Sadie Jones: And think about how you've been in those situations before, if you have previous work experience. Are you the kind of person who really can do it without much supervision? I mean, no matter what, after 1L year you don't have that much legal knowledge or experience, regardless. But I would just say, be realistic about where you're going to be successful.

Alison Monahan: I think that's right, because you do want to have a good experience, you don't want this to be a disaster where you don't have a reference. That's another useful goal of the 1L job is, if you need somebody to vouch for you that, "Yes, this person did a good job, they were hardworking, they showed up on time", whatever it is – you want to make sure that you have somebody who could say that if other employers want to ask about it.

Sadie Jones: Absolutely. I think that should be a key goal.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. What about a writing sample? Do you think it's realistic to get a writing example out of the summer job?

Sadie Jones: I do, and I think that should definitely be on the goal list. If you don't get one though, it's not the end of the world. That's okay. But I think it's really smart to go in saying, "I want to try to find a way to get one." I always think that's more interesting than probably what you wrote in school, a real situation. You do have to ask permission, so you may want to even mention it, that that's something you are considering, or is there a way for you to get that, because you're going to need someone to sign off on it and potentially redact things. But I think that's a great goal, and then you know you're working on your writing skills and you have something strong to show for your 2L interviewing.

Alison Monahan: Definitely. And I do just want to reiterate, you cannot just take something that you did and use it as your writing sample. You need sign-off, you need to make sure there's no confidential information in there, you need to make sure anything that was redacted has been redacted. So, depending on the type of work you're doing, it may be more or less challenging to get something like that.



- Sadie Jones: I think sometimes the right examples can be something where they asked you to research an issue and maybe it isn't a real situation, and so, you wrote something about it. Sometimes they sort of make up assignments for summer associates on issues they're interested in but they don't have something specific on, so it could be something like that. Usually works sometimes. But yeah, you need to absolutely make sure that someone has read it, a supervisor, and has said you're good to take it with you. And just a reminder that writing samples should be about five pages.
- Alison Monahan: Good idea. Yeah, so get that sign-off in writing too, make sure you have an email some place and save it that says, "Alright, this is signed off on, you can use it." Because you definitely don't want it to be circled back like two years later and someone's upset because you released all of this confidential information that you shouldn't have had.
- Sadie Jones: Absolutely.
- Alison Monahan: That's a disaster. Alright, well, one thing was... Let's start off by just a little bit about... Because you mentioned it should be further down the list, is this idea of working for a professor. I think sometimes people think, "Oh, that would be so amazing, I can work for one of my professors in the summer." Why do you think maybe this is not the best option?
- Sadie Jones: I mean, as an employer, to me, it looks like sort of a fallback job, because you weren't getting experience in a professional office environment, probably. And it feels more academic, obviously. If that's an area you're going to go into, then that might be the right thing to do, if that's kind of the direction you're heading. And there are certain schools that train people more towards that. But I would say that to me, you're just not going to probably get most of these skills that we're talking about in that environment. So, I sort of think of it as, if you cannot find a job, you have to have a job. And so, that is an option but I don't think it should really be on the list as one of your top choices.
- Alison Monahan: I agree, unless you're pretty sure you're going to be a legal academic. And even then, honestly, I would probably try to split it with something else.
- Sadie Jones: Agreed.
- Alison Monahan: And maybe do 10 hours a week of work for a professor, but then do your other job as well, and maybe work for the professor as a research assistant during the semester or something. But yeah, unless you're dead set on being a legal academic, I think it's just a different type of job and it's not going to get you that kind of day-to-day legal experience that ideally is what we're looking for.



- Sadie Jones: And so, even though I'm saying it's a freebie summer and you have a lot of leeway, there's also within the environment we're talking about, which is that the ideal situation is one of the jobs that we talked about, and you would get these skills from it and you'd be able to talk about that in your 2L interviews, which is one of the main places where this will come up. And so, you do need to think about it; it's not just about taking the most fun, most interesting situation, which might be working for your professor. But it's like, "How does this fit into my career goals somewhat?"
- Alison Monahan: Well, on that note, what do you think about summer study abroad, that people sometimes want to do instead of working?
- Sadie Jones: I mean, that just... I think that sends the wrong message, 100%. Again, if you have nothing and it's like nothing's panning out and you have to do something, I can imagine that. But to me, that's just a hard thing to sell as a real, solid, gaining skills sort of experience.
- Alison Monahan: I agree with that. It's like, "Well, it's probably fun that you got to go and hang out in Tuscany, but..."
- Sadie Jones: "You should have done that in your undergrad."
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, it's kind of like, "You're a grownup now, you're in grad school. It's time to actually do some work." Well, you mentioned a couple of times maybe things aren't panning out. How can people find a job for the 1L summer, and when is it even realistic to be looking?
- Sadie Jones: I think generally people are starting over winter break, maybe to start looking, and then it kind of ramps up in January. That being said, the 1L job search can kind of go later. The 2L job search is very compacted to the summer before. The 1L job search is sort of a larger window, but if you can have it locked up by January, that's going to ease a lot of pressure, I think, in the spring semester. You can focus on classes and getting prepared and all of that kind of thing. So that's, to me, the ideal situation. I would start in career services at school, they have a lot of information on 1L jobs and can point you in the right directions and know where they're looking. But mostly I think take some of these areas that we're talking about, find all the local ones, go to their websites. They're going to have how to apply, all of these things. With the judges, some of it might be relationships, so I think you can kind of ask around a little, because I know judges can look at students in different ways. Some of them do seem to look more for referrals from previous clerks or relationships they even have with law professors, or your school, things like that. But I would say make a list, like we've talked about Trello, Excel, lots of different programs, and put all these different areas that you might be interested in, who the different people are, how their application process works, and I would be really organized about it.



And I would also probably split it up into your first choices that you go for at the beginning, and if that's not panning out, "Here's where I'm going to look." And then like I said, there are some last resort sort of things, which might be the professor route. And also all of the things we talked about with networking and your personal network and LinkedIn, that's another route. But I do find that the 1L search is sort of like you apply online at a certain date, and that's how they look for 1Ls.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. And as I recall, the [NALP directory](#) also, you can filter by people who hire 1Ls. Is that right?

Sadie Jones: Yeah, although it's not really always accurate, because I think they make law firms tell them way ahead of time, so they might say something like, "Maybe." You'll also see that on the law firm's website, but that is a good way to at least get an idea, because usually if they say they're not, then they're not.

Alison Monahan: Right. Yeah, so you can go to the NALP directory. It has a checkbox online, sort out your people who might possibly be hiring 1Ls versus definitely not hiring 1Ls. And I do think professors can be an underutilized resource here because, like you said, they may have connections with a judge, they may have connections with different organizations. So if there's a class that you liked and you participated in and you think that the professor likes you and you're kind of striking out at some of these other options, I think definitely worth popping by their office hours and just saying, "Hey, I'm looking for a job this summer, these are the things I'm interested in. Do you have any thoughts around people I might talk to or I might look?", and just see what they say.

Sadie Jones: Absolutely. And you can do that as we get later into the fall, heading into the winter. I don't think it's necessarily like there's a "too early" to at least approach the subject. A lot of them won't look at applications until after the New Year or December 1st or it depends, but I think it's worth doing that. And a reminder that if there are BigLaw 1L jobs, a lot of times they're looking for a specific type of student, which is somebody who's very active on campus. It's actually less about grades, and I think law students forget this. We may have talked about it before, but they're looking for people in clubs or previously who are going to be cheerleaders on campus for that firm going into the next year. So, just so you know, that is a big component of the 1L BigLaw summer associates.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, and it's not totally out of the question that your school might even have people come to campus. I definitely did some interviews that way. Yeah, that's a pretty unlikely option, but if you do get it, it's very lucrative, so that's nice.

Sadie Jones: And it's like sort of a free job offer for the future.



Alison Monahan: Right, exactly. No, it just gives you more flexibility, basically. But I don't think for most people, even at very top schools, that is necessarily something that they should be relying upon.

Sadie Jones: But good point, if they have events on campus, you should definitely go if it's something you might even slightly be interested in, because they remember the people that they made relationships with even earlier in the semester, so that's always a good idea. Or if there's a virtual event or whatever it is.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. I think I recall in New York, there was a big New York-wide public interest fair that was kind of February/March-ish. And so, I think this is a more amorphous hiring process, it's not like if you don't have something by January 1st, all hope is lost. There will be opportunities that come up throughout the spring and things like that. At what point do you think people need to be panicking?

Sadie Jones: Probably post-spring break, where you're heading into the last part of school. Then I think you need to say, "I need to get anything just to fill my summer."

Alison Monahan: What are some options at that point?

Sadie Jones: Definitely the professor option. That's when I would lean on any connections that I had. I would go back to career services, because it is 100% in their interest to make sure that every 1L has a job. I know there's a range of career services and they're not all as responsive, but you should have gotten to know them already, and so make sure they know who you are and they're looking out for you. So I think those are all options. If you really cannot find a job, it would be good probably to take some kind of class over doing absolutely nothing, but that would be my last choice.

Alison Monahan: I totally agree with you on career services. I have some friends who work in them and they say, "So many students never come and talk to us. I might just be sitting around my office with nothing to do." And the reality is, they are pretty much constantly getting job opportunities that come in to them, that if you're top of mind and they know you're looking for something, somebody might be able to pick up the phone and call you or send you an email that's like, "Hey, we got this job that someone at a small firm who's an alum is looking for someone for the summer. I know you're looking, do you want to talk to them?"

Sadie Jones: You don't want it to be a situation where you've been looking for a 1L job from December and it's April and you've never gone to career services. I think that would be a bad situation. You still can go, but they don't know you and you've maybe made it seem like you don't care that much. So, I would say go to them first, no matter if you're sure you're getting a job or not, so that they know who you are.



- Alison Monahan: I agree. I think early in January is a great time to sort of make an appointment, have them look over your resume, cover letter, anything that you're going to need to send in. If you haven't talked to anyone yet, have that first meeting and like, "This is who I am, this is what I'm interested in. Here are the things that would be helpful if you can send to me or you can tell me where to find them." And then let them know how things are going, make an appointment every few weeks, because if you are top of mind, you are probably going to get more opportunities.
- Sadie Jones: Absolutely. And I hear students complain about their career services, and I feel like some of it is the career services is telling them the truth and it's not what they want to hear, because they're the people who have to say, "That's not realistic. That's not happening." And so, I think that is some of it. Or also, I think you haven't made the relationships with them and then they just come in and they're like, "Oh, they barely know me." I think, "Well, did you make an effort?" Maybe they have 400 students. I would say that I think students aren't getting as much as they could get out of their career services at lots of schools, different schools. So, before you're complaining about them, make sure you've really gone in prepared and you've made the relationship and really tried, before you're saying they're not helping you.
- Alison Monahan: Right, and I think that's a great point, that you have to be realistic about what they can do. If you go in and you're like, "I need a job. Provide me a job." They're like, "Well, that's not really what we do. We don't have a magic wand that we can just hand out jobs." So I think people just have to be realistic.
- Sadie Jones: And career services people like the students who are like, "I have a plan. Here's what I'm thinking. What do you think?" And then they can edit it or help them adjust. But I think it's pretty poor form to go in and be like, "Here, can you do this for me? Tell me what to do next." Tell them what you're looking for.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. I think it has to be a two-way street. They do have resources, but they definitely will be annoyed if you're like, "I expect you to find me a job because I'm paying a lot of money for tuition."
- Sadie Jones: Right. But it's always in their best interest to make sure their students have jobs, so that's something to remember. They don't want to leave anyone hanging.
- Alison Monahan: Right. And they want to know if you're having problems, so that they can kind of sit down and be like, "Okay, let's triage here. How are we going to find you a job for the summer?"



- Sadie Jones: I feel really confident that all of the 1Ls can get jobs if they sort of follow this and keep their expectations in check. You can find something to do during the summer.
- Alison Monahan: Someone will let you work for free, basically.
- Sadie Jones: Yeah, exactly.
- Alison Monahan: That's pretty much what it comes down to. Alright, we're running out of time here. Any final thoughts on this?
- Sadie Jones: Just a reminder that, where we started, that this is a summer to explore and find something that hopefully will meet some of the goals that we talk about, probably not all of them, but maybe. And so, keep that in mind when you're looking. This should be a more pleasant experience than your 2L job search, which can be more pressure-filled. And so, just remember that.
- Alison Monahan: I think that's a great point. This is actually an opportunity to explore and you will find something.
- Sadie Jones: Absolutely.
- Alison Monahan: Alright, well, thank you so much for joining us.
- Sadie Jones: Thanks for having me.
- Alison Monahan: My pleasure. With that, we are out of time. For more career help and the opportunity to work one-on-one with us, including on your summer job, check out [CareerDicta.com](https://www.careerdicta.com). 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 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](https://www.lawschooltoolbox.com/contact-form) at LawSchoolToolbox.com. Thanks for listening, and we'll talk soon!

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[Podcast Episode 94: How to Succeed at Your Summer Legal Job \(with Sara O'Connor\)](#)



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