



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 callback interviews. 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 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 callback interviews. Welcome, Sadie.

Sadie Jones: Thanks for having me back.

Alison Monahan: My pleasure. Well, first off, what is a callback interview?

Sadie Jones: So basically, a callback interview is sort of a second round of interviews after you've had your initial screening interview with one person. And it's usually going to involve five to six lawyers in the same amount of time that you had your screen interview with each person.

Alison Monahan: Right. And so, typically pre-pandemic, this would have meant that you physically went to the law firm wherever you were interviewing, regardless really of where it was, they would fly you out, you'd stay in a hotel, you'd have all this stuff. But a lot of these moved virtual, I know for the pandemic. Is that still the case across the board?

Sadie Jones: So, my understanding is it's probably somewhere around 50/50 at this point. I think that the law firms where people are physically in the office, usually the student gets a choice – either they want to do it in-person or they want to do it virtually, and I think either one is fine. You're not going to be judged based on what you pick. And it sounds like there's still limited lawyers that are going in-person, even for the places where they are supposed to be back in the office. I think a lot of them are still virtual, so I would say it could be either way, and probably it'll be your preference.

Alison Monahan: That makes sense. I know the firm that I worked for, I think has moved remote option for everyone forever, although apparently a surprising number of people are still actually showing up into the office, but I think this depends a lot. In different cities, people are doing different things. Yeah, so you don't think there's any downside to doing it virtually?



Sadie Jones: No, not at all. And it might be a little easier to schedule, is sort of the upside. If there're limited lawyers in the office, maybe there're fewer spots, and you might have to be more flexible. On the other hand, if you want to see the office in-person, there are advantages to that, and I think that's fine too.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, and I think the other thing, assuming you get the offer, you could always ask to go into the office at that point as well. It would just be a little bit less formal, but they're usually happy to set you up with more people to talk to and that kind of thing. So, yeah, I agree. I don't think people should feel super pressured to go in-person, that it's some sort of huge advantage, particularly if you're living somewhere else, like say you're in school in New York, you're interviewing in California. I was doing that. It's a royal pain. I had to fly out here, I had to stay in a hotel right in the middle of all the stuff going on for classes. So, if you can avoid that, I think there's an argument to be made for doing that.

Sadie Jones: Absolutely. And even before this, if you're in that situation, usually you group the callbacks together, and you absolutely should in this situation. Usually they sort of request it and they work with the different firms, and paying for it. So definitely keep that in mind. I would think you'd want to just do it in one shot and not make multiple trips. So, just something else if you need to travel somewhere to do it in-person.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. Alright, well, if somebody has a callback, what should they be thinking about or be prepared to talk about?

Sadie Jones: Well, I think that it is sort of similar to the initial screen interview in terms of, know everything on your own resume, so everything is comfortable for you to talk about; why you want to be at that firm, things about their practice groups, where they're located, the culture, that kind of thing. It's going to be obviously a lot more repeating things over and over again in a row, so I think you want to be similarly prepared to talk about your background and why you want to be at the firm, but you're going to have to just do it over a much longer period of time. And you want to be prepared with more, I would say questions, because there probably will be more time to ask questions in this more extensive interview.

Alison Monahan: I agree. And I think there's a little bit higher expectation, possibly, that you know a little more about the firm. I don't think you'll have to go crazy, but people understand that in those first rounds of screening interviews that you do back-to-back-to-back, you probably didn't do a super deep dive into this particular firm before you decided to sign up. Maybe you did, but I think for the callback at a minimum, you want to be very familiar with their website, the type of work that they do, where they have offices. Do you think people need to do a ton of research on the people that they're going to be interviewing with when they get their schedule?



- Sadie Jones: Not a ton. I think you should be familiar and you should know what practice group they're in, what their careers look like, everything just on the basic bio. On the other hand, I never suggest you do too much because you don't want to get freaked out if they switch it up at the last minute, which happens often. So you don't want to be so tied to, you knew exactly who you were going to interview with and you were only prepared for them. And I just think that overdoing it can kind of put you in a corner with that. So, you definitely should be familiar with whatever schedule they gave you, but you should be able to be flexible and kind of roll with it if some totally different person shows up. And they're going to know that they just got added on, so that's fine.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, and I think at a minimum, you kind of want to know, "Oh okay, this version is the partner, and this person is a first-year associate."
- Sadie Jones: And if there's a particular practice group... Because probably they've asked you what you're interested in, and they know something about your background, and they've probably at least tried to have a few interviewers that really fit. So, I would be especially prepared if it's an area you've said you want to practice in and that's the partner in the group – you want to probably know a little bit more.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, and I don't think, like you said, you need to go totally crazy here. Occasionally people will do a really deep dive on the Internet and then bring things up... I remember when I was doing the other side of interviews, people would sometimes bring up some weird factoid about my college experience or something and I'm like, "How much time have you spent Googling? This is a little weird."
- Sadie Jones: Absolutely. I would stick with their professional bio and maybe their LinkedIn, but not going to their social media.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, exactly, stick to the professional. And also I think people sometimes get paranoid. Nobody got a quiz you about their background or anything like that. Occasionally people might run into an aggressive interviewer, but the reality is that's how they are, they're probably doing that with everyone. I think that is something that people really get worked up about. What are your thoughts around that?
- Sadie Jones: Yeah, I think that people sort of overthink it. I also think that in that kind of situation, and in a lot of these things where maybe you're thrown something that you didn't expect, it's more about how you act about it than it is about you having the right answer or knowing the right thing to say. It's more like, can you kind of roll with the situation and be comfortable? You don't necessarily need to have the answer to everything, but as a lawyer, you're going to be given lots of



situations where you weren't prepared and you didn't know the answer, and can you deal with that?

Alison Monahan: Yeah, I think the classic one here is somebody brings up one bad grade or something from your transcript. How do you think people should deal with that?

Sadie Jones: Short. And you can address it. If there is a specific reason, I think it's fine to quickly say it – there was a personal issue or a health issue, I think you could say that. And then I would immediately focus on, "That was unfortunate, but I really had an upward trajectory the next semester." Focus on something positive. Even if you can't say that, I would sort of acknowledge it. You don't need to hide it – if it's true, it's true. And then sort of move on from it. I definitely wouldn't get into a circle where you're continuing to talk about it or to explain it.

Alison Monahan: Right. And I think humor can also be effective here. Obviously, you're in the callback, you've passed the initial screening, probably your overall GPA is not that bad, or you wouldn't be there. So, if someone does bring up, "Whoa, what happened in Civ Pro?" – you know that question is probably coming if it's the one bad grade on your transcript. Someone will ask you about that. But I think having some response that's light, that's ready to go, and that reflects into the positive is always good – so, "Oh yeah, gosh. Boy, was that class a total mess? Whoa! But as you can see, I did pretty well the rest of the semester." You don't really have to have an answer.

Sadie Jones: Exactly. And that's a situation where there's nothing you can do to change the grade, so I think it's kind of jerky to ask about it personally.

Alison Monahan: It is, but someone will.

Sadie Jones: Yeah, absolutely. And that's who they are, not who you are.

Alison Monahan: I would never have asked about that, but somebody else would.

Sadie Jones: I guess I just feel like, what's the point? Because yeah, the grade is on the paper.

Alison Monahan: Some people, maybe they're legitimately curious, I don't know – give them the benefit of the doubt. But yeah, basically they're just being a jerk and seeing if you can handle the pressure. So, do not complain about your professor, don't complain about anything. Lee has a good answer to her one bad grade, which was her first-year Legal Writing, her first semester, and she says, "Yeah, that class didn't go well. I was a first year, I learned something, and then if you see, I CALI'd the class the next semester." Nobody's going to give you a hard time about that.



- Sadie Jones: Absolutely. And yeah, I always think it's good if there's something positive you can sort of move on from it with.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, exactly, like, "Oh, I learned something, and weirdly, I still want to be a litigator, even with that terrible Civ Pro. I'm taking some more classes next year to try to make sure I know the information", whatever. Proactive, light, don't freak out about it, I think is the key.
- Sadie Jones: And you're a human, they're human. We're not robots, we're not perfect.
- Alison Monahan: Some people.
- Sadie Jones: It's fine to acknowledge that. Yeah, that's a good point. But I always think it's good to show some of your personality. I think that is part of what they're looking for in the callback process.
- Alison Monahan: Well, let's talk a little bit more about that, because as I alluded to, presumably, you are basically qualified or you would not be sitting in the callback interviews. So, what are firms really looking for in callbacks?
- Sadie Jones: First of all, I always tell students that, in a way, the callback should be sort of a relief, because the initial round is basically trying to figure out if you're qualified. So, grades rarely come into it in the callback, or academic performance. Occasionally, if they're deciding at the very end, maybe they would look at it, but generally, if you've managed a callback, you are deserving of an offer. A lot of people call it different things, like the X factor, or a sparkle. I could name 10 different things I've heard various firms say – but the thing that you have that'll be interesting and make you fit in with that particular firm or that particular culture. So, that's definitely high on the list in the callback. I feel like everyone's sort of evaluating you for, do they want to work with you as a colleague? It can be long hours, you can have to go on long business trips, so are you someone who's going to be a team player? It may be specific to a practice group too at some places – so, are you a fit for that practice group, do you have the right background? But I think a lot of it really is who you are, would you be a good colleague there?
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, absolutely. When I was doing interviews, that was kind of the only thing I really cared about, was, can this person talk to me for 20 to 30 minutes, preferably about something that's not law-related? I definitely went hard usually on the hobbies and interest section of the resume and gave people softball questions about that, really just to see can they hold a conversation, would I be able to tolerate this person if I had to work with them? You're looking for somebody who doesn't sound like a jerk, they don't sound entitled, and they can put two words together and not just sit there and make me talk for 30 minutes.



Sadie Jones: Totally. And I think a mistake some students make is focusing too much on the academic side when preparing. So, they can talk about all their classes, or a specific paper, or their summer internship, but then they can't get off that topic, or every prepared answer is only law-related. And I actually think what you said is true for a lot of interviewers, which is they kind of want to talk to them about other things, or at least half. So, be prepared to bring in other experiences you've had in maybe other jobs, or it could even be undergrad, or a hobby, or something you've devoted a lot of time to outside of law school, because I do think you don't want to forget that they want to see who you are as a person, not just a law student.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, absolutely. Not that I'm giving anything away here, but my general line of questioning was basically, "Oh, how do you like law school?" Because that tells me basically, does this person, a) have the judgment to tell me that they don't hate it, and also lets them kind of talk about... We are going to be doing legal work – if somebody can't talk about what they like or don't like, or anything positive about law school, I probably don't want them in the same room. And from there, I was usually like, "What kind of classes did you like or not like?" Again, just can you talk about this type of stuff? And honestly, at that point, I would usually move into hobbies, because I don't want to talk about law anymore. I do this all day long.

Sadie Jones: And I bet that makes it more interesting if you're doing a lot of interviews, because you hear different answers from different people. Whereas if you ask them only in the legal area, it might just be the same thing over and over again. So I think it just keeps it interesting.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, and I think people – you alluded to this earlier, but people definitely need to be prepared to kind of say the same thing over and over, which is really weird when you sit there and do five or six interviews. Anything that draws attention in your background or your resume, people are going to ask you about it. I had a weird background, I just owned that. People always looked at my resume and went, "Huh, tell me more about this. You went from sociology to architecture to programming to law. How does that fit together?" And I had this prepared answer that I would say literally five or six times a day, and everyone would kind of go, "Oh, okay", and then move on. But you need to have that kind of honed about anything that people... And also, if you've been asked about it a couple of times in an interview already, you know that for the next ones you need an answer.

Sadie Jones: Absolutely. And I think this is not so much about that there is a right answer to explain your background, and that's the key – that you said the exact right thing. It's about the fact that you were comfortable, you thought about it, you put it together, you knew that was coming, that kind of thing. I don't think that there



is a set way to explain things that's right, and another one that's wrong. It's just about you being able to explain it and being comfortable with it and having it make sense and not be too complicated.

Alison Monahan: Right. I knew people were going to talk about this, it is a weird background. So my story was sort of like, "Oh well, it's actually pretty interesting. Designing a brief is not that different from designing a house or designing a database. It's all kind of the same thought process." I would usually pause at that point and if somebody wanted to talk more about it, I could explain to them why I thought that was the case. But if they were like, "Oh, okay" and moved on, then that was great too. I don't want to talk about the same thing all day.

Sadie Jones: I think that's a great answer. I really like finding a connection between things. It's just interesting and it makes sense, and not everything has to look exactly right on paper to make sense when you talk about it. Also if, let's say, for example, you took a semester or a year off, let's say – I don't know – you had an illness or a sick family member or something – you can explain that quickly, you don't need to go into detail. I feel like that's where people get off the rails about some of that weird stuff – "And then this happened, and then this happened", and it's this really big sob story. I think it can be weird in an interview, so just be able to explain all this stuff succinctly.

Alison Monahan: I completely agree. I think you should have your 20 to 30-second answer for the question you know you're going to get, and then you should have or your two to three-minute answer. And you should give the short answer, and then pause and see what their reaction is, and if they want more... You can even say, "I'm happy to talk more about this, but I'll leave that to you." And if they ask for more – sure, go into your two-minute answer, but don't give that originally. I think in general, people tend to sort of get nervous about things and overtalk in a lot of these interviews. Certain people definitely have this tendency, and if you do have that tendency, I think you need to be aware of it and make sure that you're cutting yourself off and saying, "Oh, would you like more information about any of this?" or, "Do you want me to go on?", and let them kind of say "Yes" or "No". And if they say "No", then stop talking.

Sadie Jones: Absolutely. And this is where you really should practice this kind of thing with other people, because it may not be something that feels as long as it does to the other person. And especially when you keep going, there's always that part where that thought ends, and then if there's even one little space they'll just keep talking.

Alison Monahan: Yeah.

Sadie Jones: And so, you don't want to be that person. I 100% think that that's a big issue. It's also an issue when you practice answers word-for-word, which I highly



recommend you not do, because then people start feeling like, "Oh, they forgot that part, and it's like they're going back to a script." And so, I'd be really careful to avoid things like that. It can be more natural. You should hit maybe some points that you've kind of reviewed in your head, but other than that... It's also a conversation, they might ask you a question. So listen, so that you can answer it really, and not just say the answer that you were practicing.

Alison Monahan: That's very true. If you ask a question, you probably want the actual answer. This is not like a political debate where you have to redirect to something else. And if people have a tendency to monologue or a tendency to not really answer questions directly, I think that is something you definitely need to work on before these interviews, because it is very frustrating to be sitting in an interview for 20 or 30 minutes as the interviewer while someone just talks at you.

Sadie Jones: Absolutely. And I think that students can get focused on having the right answer, and then they get into that mode rather than... It's okay if something sort of trips you up and you get a little off, but it's better for it to be authentic and real.

Alison Monahan: Definitely. Alright, let's switch gears a little bit and talk about a few different scenarios that can come up with callbacks. Number one – and this one shouldn't happen, but sometimes it does – what if you're late, either for an in-person or a virtual interview?

Sadie Jones: My advice is to acknowledge it and move on as quick as possible. So, get there as soon you can – hopefully you're not too late. But I think the biggest issue with being late is just getting stuck in that mode and trying to explain it, and just like the whole interview goes off course. That's most what I've seen when that happens. So if there's a reason, I guess you could say it really quick, but then I would just be ready to go.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, exactly. Don't belabor this, you screwed up. Not looking great, but just like, "Oh my gosh, I'm so sorry. Let's get started." Alright, what if you're doing a virtual interview and either your Internet connection isn't great, or your computer starts acting up? Sometimes people start getting lots of rings or it just crashes. What should you do in that scenario?

Sadie Jones: This is tough. First of all, I'd go back to – I think we've talked before – do whatever you can to make sure that you've tested it so that hopefully this doesn't happen. So, try to head it off the best you can, but things do happen. I feel like we all know that at this point, and sometimes it's not the best connection. I think if you can keep going and basically be heard, I think it's fine to say to the other person, "Can you hear me?" Because there's no point in talking if they can't hear you and they don't know what's going on. And maybe



you say, "Maybe we could start this again or refresh it, or reschedule if it's that bad." But if it's not that bad and it's a little bit off, I'd do your best to just make it work and try to ignore the thing that's going on in the background, if it's something like that.

Alison Monahan: I agree. And one other thing I think you want to do in advance is make sure there's a backup plan if you're interviewing virtually. I did a virtual interview the other day for something and they in advance said, "Okay, we want to make sure we have your phone number in case there's a problem with your Internet connection. And so, I think something like that is always good to ask about if they haven't mentioned it. You don't want to push on it, but I think it makes you look responsible, like, "Hey, just in case there are any problems, is there a backup plan? Should I be ready to be on the phone?" Whatever it is.

Sadie Jones: Absolutely. And I know I've had some things with Zoom or other systems where it works better on the computer or the phone. So, make sure also that you've checked if there's a certain browser that's better, if there's an ideal setup, because sometimes it is just switching to another browser or something like that. But I agree. And with your Internet, there are fluke things where the whole Internet goes down and you have no connection. And that's right where a phone call would still work, and you can't control that, but some things you can control, whether it's checking the signal ahead of time, if you need to restart it, that kind of thing.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. One thing I always get worked up about when I have to do video calls is, should I wear headphones or not headphones, or which type of headphones? I don't know, I think some of this probably doesn't really matter that much, but that's something I always... Because I have podcasting headphones that are huge but they look weird. I don't know, do you have any thoughts around that?

Sadie Jones: Well, I will say most of us wear AirPods all the time. I have found AirPods aren't great in this situation, so I would not use a Bluetooth thing.

Alison Monahan: Agreed.

Sadie Jones: I would use something that's physically plugged in.

Alison Monahan: I agree. I usually just use small headphones that actually plug in. I think that's the best option.

Sadie Jones: Like the old Apple ones.

Alison Monahan: Exactly, the old school ones you can get for \$10 on Amazon if you need them.

Sadie Jones: Yeah, I agree. And obviously, test it ahead of time.



- Alison Monahan: Yeah, I think they're less obtrusive, and unless you have a really nice setup already going on in your house or wherever you're doing this, I think just put your computer between... Put yourself between you and a wall and call it a day. Nobody's going to be on Rate My Room at this point or whatever for your interview.
- Sadie Jones: Just keep it as, I think, blank as possible.
- Alison Monahan: I agree. Alright, so you briefly alluded to this earlier – your schedule gets switched around the last minute. How do you handle that?
- Sadie Jones: So, this is similar to being late, in that it's really about how you handle it, not that everything's perfect. Just don't make any big thing about it. Don't seem nervous. Don't seem like you don't know what to do. You just go with it. It's a different person, they know how to do an interview, they know that they just got switched around, they know that you don't know their background. That's fine. You can ask some questions that are sort of general. To me, this is really just about going with the flow, and that says a lot, that it's no big deal.
- Alison Monahan: Right. I definitely don't think you should be like, "Oh, I was really looking forward to interviewing with that person."
- Sadie Jones: Or act like they are that person just to see if they're in the same practice group or something like that.
- Alison Monahan: I think sometimes people don't realize that the hiring person who's interacting with them at the interview actually has a lot of power. I can imagine people would say things like that occasionally to you.
- Sadie Jones: Yeah, it's really annoying because I think it's better in that situation, if you're talking to the hiring person, the recruiting person, that you sort of acknowledge, "Oh, it must be really difficult to put all these schedules together. Thank you so much." That's the time to do that, because this happened because somebody had some kind of scheduling issue or didn't show up, and it's hard to put all of these the whole recruiting season together.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, absolutely. I mean, people get held up in court or whatever. Yeah, and the person who has to deal with all that fallout is basically you in that scenario. Be nice to you.
- Sadie Jones: Yeah, I always really liked it when students were like, "Wow, this is a lot of work. Thanks so much." Or they were like, "I had a great time. Thanks for that schedule." Even if it's not true, it's just nice.



Alison Monahan: Yeah. I think acknowledge the people who are actually helping you out and are closest to the process is always a good look. Alright, well, what if you are just not really connecting with a specific interviewer for whatever reason, and the time is just dragging?

Sadie Jones: I think that's just life. You're going to be in situations with people that you don't connect with. I think if you connect with most of them, that's great. So I'd basically just say to yourself, "Alright, this is 30 minutes, it's not going to be super pleasant." I don't think you need to fill in every single blank. It's supposed to be on them to keep the interviewer going. Obviously, sometimes the heavy lifting does end up with the interviewee. So that's where just have as many prepared questions as you can, and you kind of just think to yourself, "Okay, this isn't my person, but I'm just going to make this go as smoothly as possible", because you're just not going to connect with everybody.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. And I think this is where having questions ready to go is useful – a lot of questions – and also really kind of having some curiosity about their answers. And I think sometimes students don't necessarily do that. So, if you can ask somebody a question, even if it's a question about, "Oh, what does your typical day look like?" or, "What are some of the things that you're working on right now?" – that could either kill 10 seconds if they're like, "Oh, I'm working on a brief on this case", and then you move on. Or you can follow up: "Oh, what's the client like? What's the case about? Are you going to court every day?" Even now, you'd be like, "Well, is court virtual or is it in-person? How is that working? Do you think there are pros and cons to that?" You can ask a lot of questions about basically nothing to kill time.

Sadie Jones: And that's a great example of... That could feel like a terrible interview to you, but if they leave feeling like you made them feel good about their job, it's going to feel great and you're going to get a good review.

Alison Monahan: Right. People love talking about themselves, particularly lawyers, particularly lawyers who know they're kind of boring people, and they're probably in a boring practice area. If you talk to that person who does ERISA about ERISA, even if you know basically nothing about ERISA, they're going to walk away thinking you were the most charming person that they've met that week.

Sadie Jones: Because I bet no one ever ask them, because they think it's boring.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, exactly. So, if you are in those ones where like, "Wow, they're just not talking a lot", the more you can get them talking and the more you can have curiosity about what they're saying, I think the better.

Sadie Jones: I agree. And it is what it is. You'll have another interviewer after.



- Alison Monahan: Yeah, exactly. In between the interviews, you sort of shake it off, like, "Alright, that didn't go so well, let's reset." If you're in-person, you've got a little walk down the hallway that you can kind of reset. If you're virtual, you probably have a couple of minutes between interviews. Just shake it off, move on to the next one, and hopefully, that's a little more engaging.
- Sadie Jones: Yeah. Just don't get stuck – I agree – in any mode or an answer you said that you didn't like. Just move on, you can think about it later.
- Alison Monahan: Right. And definitely do not mention it to your next interviewer, like, "Wow, that person was really boring."
- Sadie Jones: I've seen people do that.
- Alison Monahan: I think it's just like you want to connect and you're not really thinking, but you're like, "Wow, that was really inappropriate." So yeah, kind of think before you talk in all these situations. Alright, well, we're getting short on time. Let's do a couple more. What if you get a question that you don't like or you don't know how to answer it, whether that is an offensive question, for whatever reason, or if it's just one that you generally don't enjoy?
- Sadie Jones: Well, if it's offensive, maybe even illegal, I think it's fine to say, "I don't feel comfortable answering that" or, "That doesn't seem like a question I should be answering." And you can evaluate the firm by that. I think that's good information to have. If it's something where they ask you something specific and you don't know the answer, I think it's great to say, "Oh, I'm not sure, but I'll look it up", if it's something that you could look up. And that's an example where I would close the loop with them. And I think that says something, that you really were listening and remembered and came back to it. I think there's always a way to have a non-answer, like, "Oh, we haven't covered that yet", or sometimes you can sort of change the subject a little bit or kind of answer it in a way of something you're more comfortable with. But I think if it's something where you're not sure is another example of how you deal with the question more than what the answer was. And what you definitely don't want to do is just say something that's wrong, because you're just coming up with something. I think that's way worse than just acknowledging that you don't know the answer.
- Alison Monahan: Right, exactly. Don't make things up. If they ask you, "Oh, my friend teaches at your school. Have you taken a class with them?" "Oh yeah." I mean, the answer there, if it's "No" is "No".
- Sadie Jones: Yeah, because you're just going to get down this you have to lie rabbit hole.



- Alison Monahan: Yeah, lying is just not good. Yeah, I think it's much better to say, "Oh, I haven't had a chance to interact with them yet, but it sounds like something I would love to do, so I'll look into that for next semester."
- Sadie Jones: Absolutely.
- Alison Monahan: Alright, well, one more thing. If this is going on in-person, people might be invited to lunch, or even dinner. What are some pitfalls to avoid in this situation?
- Sadie Jones: I think actually with lunch, it's two things – or dinner, any kind of food thing. One is just basic table manners, ordering something that's not messy, that's easy to eat, ordering along the same lines as what the other person is. So, if they're just ordering one course, you just order one course. No alcohol ever, ever, ever, even if they're drinking. It sounds silly, but you are comfortable with the utensils and your napkins in your lap, just everything's neat. And then two, not over-talking too much about casual things, because I think that is the danger of a meal, and kind of what they're looking for some of the time is to get some more stuff out of you. So, keep it professional as much as you can, if personal things come up, surface level, just don't give things away that you wouldn't have said in the regular interview, just because it feels like a more casual setting.
- Alison Monahan: Definitely. And they usually send the younger people to lunch with you too, so it feels more informal. I remember talking to them once, I'm like, "Oh yeah, I'm not really sure if I want to be in San Francisco again yet or not." And that was stupid. I did not get an offer at that firm.
- Sadie Jones: That's the exact kind of things that people say.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, because I was just like, "Oh yeah, they are like my buddies. We're hanging out, we're going to lunch." They're not your buddies. It's still an interview.
- Sadie Jones: "Oh, I just want to do this for two years and pay back as much of my student loans as possible."
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, also not cool. That's not what they want to be thinking. Yeah, so just keep it light, be prepared to talk about some stuff that's not work-related. And I think there people can get into some illegal or semi-illegal stuff unintentionally, like, "Oh, do you have kids? Are you married?" None of that's actually okay, and don't ask anyone else that either.
- Sadie Jones: Absolutely. That's why I think if things get into your personal, keep it surface level, keep it innocuous. Something to keep in mind, because like you said, they do usually send the younger people or more junior people to lunch, is that just because they're more junior doesn't mean they're the easy interview. I think



people get really intimidated by partners, and actually, partners usually know how to interview better and are judging you on things that are totally legit, and they know who makes a good associate, that kind of thing. I find that the junior people really try to trip people up that are behind them – sometimes, not always. And so, just something to keep in mind – don't be so loosey-goosey with the more junior people and be really nervous with a partner. A lot of times it's not in seniority order what's going to be the hardest.

Alison Monahan: No, that's definitely true. I've had junior people quiz me on crazy stuff on my resume, where I'm like, "Seriously? Why are we talking about this?" But yeah, I think at lunch, just continue playing it kind of close to the vest, they don't need to hear every detail of your personal life, about how your partner is looking for medical residencies and you're not sure where you're going to end up. None of that needs to be on the table.

Sadie Jones: Because they will tell everyone, just so you know.

Alison Monahan: Of course, absolutely. Everybody you talk to is going to report back on you on a form: "Do you have any concerns about this person?" "Well, they're not really sure what city they want to be in." That's not going to go well. So, just play it close to the vest. Talk about boring things, talk about whatever sporting event is going on, or the hot weather, whatever it is. There are ways that you can kill time. "How's everybody's food?" Like, "Oh, that looks great" or, "What's that?" There are things you can talk about.

Sadie Jones: Yeah. And maybe you have a few anecdotes from your summer job or something. Just lighthearted, but yeah, I wouldn't get into anything about your personal life.

Alison Monahan: Definitely not. And they shouldn't either, but things happen. Alright, well, we're definitely out of time on this one. Any final thoughts on this topic?

Sadie Jones: Kind of what I said before, about making sure that you're really in the moment and responding to the questions and listening, because I think it's that situation where sometimes someone introduces themselves and then you can't remember their name, because you were thinking about what you were going to say next and you weren't listening. I think this is what happens in interviews a lot. So, you should obviously practice and be prepared, but most of this is just going to happen in the moment and you can't anticipate it. So, just kind of keep that in mind, that you're going to listen.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, and I think that's equally true in a virtual setting. Make sure that you are focused on this. I know sometimes people start multitasking just because that's habitual when we're on our computer, but you shouldn't be looking at your text messages on your phone, anything like that. Just nothing distracting, nothing



that's going to distract you from this person talking. And yeah, if you're not listening to them, then you can't really engage with them and it's probably not going to be a very good interview.

Sadie Jones: Exactly. And the stuff that you think they can't see, maybe they can. They can see where your eyes are.

Alison Monahan: True, exactly. They know if you're not really looking at the camera. If you're wearing glasses, people can see the reflection. There's actually a lot of information people can get on a video that you may not be thinking about.

Sadie Jones: Exactly, I agree.

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 prepping for your callback interviews, you can 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) at LawSchoolToolbox.com. Thanks for listening, and we'll talk soon! Good luck with your callbacks!

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