Episode 46: 4 Myths About the LSAT from Expert Nathan Fox

Alison Monahan: Hello, and welcome to the Law School Toolbox podcast. Today we've got Nathan Fox, founder of Fox LSAT, here to talk about some common misperceptions about the LSAT, which if you're sitting for the test, you definitely want to hear. Your Law School Toolbox host today is Alison Monahan, and typically I'm joined by my co host, Lee Burgess.

Together, we're the co creators of the Law School Toolbox, the Bar Exam Toolbox, the Catapult Conference, and the Trebuchet Legal Career site, and I also run the Girl's Guide to Law School. If you enjoy the show, please leave a review on iTunes. And if you have any questions, don't hesitate to reach out to us.

You can reach me via the contact forum on LawSchoolToolbox.com, and we would love to hear from you. With that, let's get started.

Welcome back. Today we're talking about some dangerous LSAT myths with Nathan Fox, founder of Fox LSAT. Nathan has his own podcast called The Thinking LSAT Podcast, which you probably wanna check out if you are preparing for the lsat, and you can also find him on Twitter @NathanFox

Nathan Fox: @NFox.

Alison Monahan: Sorry, Nathan.

You can find him on Twitter @NFox. All right. Well, first off, Nathan, I want to get some background because you have a pretty interesting story. How did you end up in a career helping people prepare for the LSAT, especially after going to law school? Like, are you supposed to leave all this behind once you get to law school?

Nathan Fox: Yeah, one would think, and most people do, but I was, I was actually a teacher before I was in law school. I started as a GMAT instructor for PowerScore, and they needed an LSAT teacher in San Francisco, so they paid me to prepare for and take the LSAT.

Alison Monahan: Nice.

Nathan Fox: So I did, and I got a 179, that was in February of 2007.

And I immediately started teaching LSAT classes in San Francisco, just fell in love with it, but it was only a part time job. And then I kind of stupidly let my students at the time talk me into going to law school. Never really wanted to be

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a lawyer, never knew what lawyers did. Don't be like me, you know, it was just like the dumbest reason to go to law school.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, and you wrote in a post about this that we can link to about why you should not do what Nathan did about going to law school.

Nathan Fox: Yeah, please, please do what I say and not what I do. So, I pretty much hated law school, but fell even more in love with teaching while I was in school. I worked all the way through law school.

Started my own business during my first summer. Summer between 1L and 2L years, I started Fox LSAT. And just kind of never looked back never took the bar. It's a weird niche, right? No one grows up wanting to be an LSAT teacher.

Alison Monahan: No, I mean, I'm sitting here thinking, God, I can't imagine anything. I would like to do less than take the LSAT like repeatedly and every day.

Right. I mean, lucky for you that it's a useful skill set.

Nathan Fox: Oh, I can't imagine anything that I would like to do more. I mean, I love the test and I love my students, so it's just the greatest gig in the world, really.

Alison Monahan: I can see loving the students. And what about the LSAT do you love? I don't think that's a common point of view.

Nathan Fox: It makes so much sense. It's just, once you understand what they're asking you, it's just not that hard. I just, I really believe that the LSAT is learnable. In a lot of ways, it's a test of how hard you can work, right? They've got, now, 77 practice tests that you can work on. You know, if you're afraid of hard work, you're not a lawyer to begin with.

Alison Monahan: Right.

Nathan Fox: If you're not afraid of hard work, and you really do want to be a lawyer, All you gotta do is just crank your way through, you know, a couple dozen of those practice tests. Get some help if you can afford it, or find a study partner if you can't afford a fancy private tutor like me. But, if you work your way through a dozen of those tests, you're gonna realize that essentially they're asking you the same question over and over.

And that the right answer is right.

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Alison Monahan: Well, I mean, do you think it's more teachable than other standardized tests like the GRE or the GMAT?

Nathan Fox: I can't really speak to that. I will say that, you know, like GRE and GMAT both have math on them, right? And if you don't have math skills, then you are going to be in big trouble on those exams.

Alison Monahan: That's definitely right.

Nathan Fox: LSAT has no math whatsoever.

Alison Monahan: Good news. Good news for the aspiring lawyer.

Nathan Fox: There's one part of the LSAT which I think is really hard to learn, and that's just mastery of the English language. You know, it is a very intense test of your English language ability. And so, if you're not great, you know, if like, if you wouldn't describe yourself as a reader, if you don't like writing, if you don't like reading, if you don't like words, then this is gonna be a struggle for you.

Alison Monahan: Right, and frankly, law school and being a lawyer is probably also going to be a struggle for you. So, it could be a good indicator if you really hate the LSAT, maybe law school's not the best choice.

Nathan Fox: Yeah, I've never, I've never seen anybody who I, who I legitimately believed in as a lawyer, like, I can see you as a lawyer. I've never had that in 10 years now, almost, of teaching the LSAT.

I've never once seen a student thwarted by the LSAT who I actually believed in as a lawyer. It's like, if this test stops you from going to law school, good. That's the best thing that ever happened to you.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, absolutely. You just saved yourself three years of your life and a whole lot of money and got sent a signal that, you know, maybe what?

You should probably be doing something else.

Nathan Fox: Well, the bar exam's harder, right? I mean, law school's harder, bar exam's harder, legal practice is harder than that, so.

Alison Monahan: No, I mean, the bar exam, like the MBE, if we're talking about standardized tests, you know, the MBE, the multiple choice component of the bar exam, like, it's legitimately difficult.

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Like, it is definitely, I think, the most difficult test I've ever taken, and I'm really good at standardized tests.

Nathan Fox: Yeah. Yeah. You know, that's why I, I always end up saying this. I don't want to crush anyone's dreams, okay, and I hate, I hate being a bearer of bad news, but I frequently find myself being a bearer of bad news.

If this test, the LSAT, if the LSAT is stopping you from going to law school, then you might want to just say, okay, this was not really meant to be.

Alison Monahan: Right, but on the other hand, I mean, I know you've told me before, like, you sometimes see these students who have these remarkable improvements, right?

Nathan Fox: Oh, I think the test is very learnable.

So, particularly the logical reasoning and the logic games are very practicable, very learnable, once you understand what they're asking, once you start to see the patterns. People improve their score by a lot. I mean, 10 points is kind of expected. 15, 20 points improvement is not all that unusual. And, you know, 20 points, man, if you start at a 140 and you end up at a 160, that's the difference between not getting into law school at all and probably getting scholarship offers from many schools.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, so I guess the takeaway message is you shouldn't just give up necessarily the first time you take it if you get a bad score, but if then you put in the time and effort and you really do the preparation and you're still not seeing, you know, any real improvement, maybe this is a sign that law school is a bad choice.

Nathan Fox: Yeah, I would say, you know, rough rule of thumb, I want to see 10 full practice tests. And if you do one section a day, that's only going to take you 40 days, you know, it's an hour a day.

Alison Monahan: It's like Noah.

Nathan Fox: Yeah, right. It's an hour a day for 40 days, and that'll be 10 practice tests. And if your score hasn't improved to a level where, you know, you can at least start to sniff the kinds of law schools that you want to go to, then yeah, maybe that's time to give up.

But, but, certainly, I don't care about your first score. I mean, I've seen people start in the 130s and end up in the 160s. So, it's not so much that it's like a diagnostic thing, and if you do a first test and you're terrible at it, then you're

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always going to be terrible at it. I want to see how hard you can work and I want to see how much you improve once you put in like that sustained effort.

Alison Monahan: Right. I mean, I have to admit, I feel like I probably really screwed up my LSAT preparation. I actually was, I mean, I guess there were a couple of reasons. One, I've typically been very good at standardized tests. And so I just thought like, oh, you know, this is just like the GRE. I can walk in and like maybe review the math or whatever, but like no big deal.

And also, I guess I just didn't totally appreciate the importance of the LSAT, like, when you're applying to law school. I mean, your LSAT score is hugely important and I was kind of like, oh, you know, like, I'll see, like, you know, I'll, I'll do a good job, but whatever, like, doesn't really matter that much, which is totally not true, right?

Nathan Fox: No, I mean, it doesn't matter what your level is, you want to get the best LSAT score you possibly can. It's the most important component, you know, grades and. LSAT score are your most important undergraduate GPA and LSAT score are your most important components for your law school application. And LSAT, because it's one number that they have for every single applicant, they are going to weight LSAT score more heavily than they're going to weight grades.

It kind of makes sense, right? It's hard to compare different majors, different schools. But with LSAT score, they've got one number, and, you know, sorry, this is the reality of law school admissions right now. I didn't make the test, but it is going to be the most important component, not just for where you get in, but also for how much you pay.

Alison Monahan: Exactly. The money thing is huge.

Nathan Fox: Well, these days, everybody's paying a different price to go to law school, right?

Alison Monahan: Right.

Nathan Fox: I mean, they have like a rack rate. But that's like paying sticker price for a car. They give everyone scholarships. At some schools, almost 80 percent of the class now is getting some scholarship help.

Alison Monahan: At least their first year.

Nathan Fox: At least their first year, sure, yeah.

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Alison Monahan: We have some podcast episodes on this recently if you want to find out whether you're going to keep your scholarship. In fact, you know, the same skills that allow you to prepare for the LSAT probably allow you to figure out if you're actually going to be able to keep your scholarship or what your odds are.

Nathan Fox: Oh wow, that, yeah, that's really interesting. I mean, because at some schools it's only like a third of the scholarship recipients are going to keep their scholarship, right?

Alison Monahan: Exactly, and they'll set the GPA, or they'll set the curve, like, you know, at a number where it's statistically impossible for some huge percentage of them to keep their scholarships.

Nathan Fox: Sure, well, like, the, the easy example of that is where they tell you all you need is a 3.0 to keep your scholarship, but their curve is centered around a 2.7.

Alison Monahan: Exactly.

Nathan Fox: So then they just know by definition that, you know, well over half the class is going to have under a 3.0.

Alison Monahan: Exactly. It's the sort of thing where like, I hope that, maybe there's no math, you know, here, but we hope that you at least can figure this one out.

Nathan Fox: Yeah. I mean, we could like draw some pictures for you if we, if you need the help.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, if we need to. We could draw a bell curve and they put the line there. So you're like, oh wow, there are a lot of people under that.

Nathan Fox: This is such an important message. I mean, I'm glad you're getting it out there to as many people as you can because, it's like people, applicants want to just always say, Oh, 3.0. Well, I've never had under a 3.0. Of course I'll get a 3.0.

Alison Monahan: It's easy. You don't even have to think about it.

Nathan Fox: Right. But then I'm sorry, your school is giving, you know, they're centering their curve around a B minus, which is a 2.7. So you're not going to get it.

Alison Monahan: It's just basic math. But anyway, so let me tell you how I screwed up my LSAT.

Nathan Fox: Okay.

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Alison Monahan: I basically, I was sort of arrogant about it, to be honest. I decided to go to law school on a whim. I think the LSAT was coming up in a couple of weeks, so I signed up at the last minute. I never actually sat through an entire full length practice exam.

I didn't go in cold. I took each section and I was like, okay, reading comprehension, that's easy enough. I should do a little work on the games. I got a book called like LSAT 180 or something, so I figured I should just work on the hard problems. Did a couple of like you know, I legitimately worked on that for a few weeks, and then I went and sat for the test, and what I realized is that having never actually sat through the entire thing is actually extremely draining.

Like, it's really exhausting, and the test conditions I was in were horrible. Like, there were jackhammering outside in the parking lot. Like, you know, it was like the worst imaginable, like, conditions to be taking this test in, and so as a result, I did do really well until the very last section when, like, half of the problems I missed, I missed in the last section.

Nathan Fox: Okay. Yeah. But you still did great, right? I mean, you're-

Alison Monahan: I mean, I did well enough. Yeah. I mean, I am good at standardized tests, but, I mean, I think I made a 170, but you know, I could have made, like, I probably could have been much closer to 180 if I just even sat for two or three full practice tests.

Nathan Fox: Yeah, and so a couple things about that. I don't think that you would have had the endurance problem you had if you would have been better at those 35 minute bursts. So my philosophy is not so much centered around like, hey, you need to sit down all day and do a full length test so that you can train for the endurance of it.

My thing is more like, get really good at those 35 minute bursts start to feel like they're easy, because they are. And once you recognize how easy they are, then you can do 4, 5, 6, 10, of them in a row, and it's really not going to be that tiring.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, I was good until like, what, four or five, but it was like the sixth one, I think, that really just killed me.

Nathan Fox: Sure, and you, you probably ran across, I don't know, you, you might have been, let's see, you're kind of mathy, so maybe the games were easy for you to begin with?

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Alison Monahan: Well, also I'm really visual, so like, I didn't have that much trouble in the games, but I think it was, I think the games might have been last, and I think those do require, like, more brain power.

Nathan Fox: They're all or nothing too, right? I mean you either like see the shortcut in the system, you either get the system or you don't.

Alison Monahan: It was one of those situations where like I hit a problem like on number two or something, and like even though it wasn't hard, like I wasted a little time on it, and then I was like struggling to catch up and was kind of flailing, like, you know, it was just one of those things.

Nathan Fox: Yeah. I would recommend that students get real LSAT tests. The book you mentioned, I'm not sure if those were real tests. It sounded like it was selected problems that you were working from.

Alison Monahan: Oh yeah, it was definitely more like, we're not gonna show You can figure out 80 percent of it on your own, so we're gonna get you good at like the last harder part, but for me, like, that wasn't really the problem, I don't think.

Nathan Fox: No, it's and it's not the best way to learn in any case. I mean, I understand that it kind of superficially makes sense. Oh, if I can do the hard ones, then I can do the whole test.

Alison Monahan: Right.

Nathan Fox: But the truth is that some of the hardest questions are there to differentiate the 179s from the 180s.

Alison Monahan: Hmm.

Nathan Fox: And some of them, frankly, are not very satisfying in the end analysis, okay?

I was working with a tutoring student earlier today, And I don't want to blow my own horn too much, but I might be the best in the world at doing LSAT logical reasoning, right, I've like written multiple books about it, and I've got a podcast for a year and a half about it, and I'm really good at the LSAT logical reasoning.

But we came to one question where I could make a case for one of the answers, I could make a case for the other one of the answers. My gut was telling me that, yeah, I mean, I actually probably would have gotten it right, but I was only like 51 percent in favor of the correct answer.

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Alison Monahan: Right, it sounds like the MBE pretty much every question.

Nathan Fox: Yeah, and it's, I think the point there is that you can't learn that much from studying that question.

Alison Monahan: Right.

Nathan Fox: You can learn a lot more from the earlier, easier questions.

Alison Monahan: Well, the other thing is, I mean, they all count the same, right?

Nathan Fox: Exactly. Yeah.

Alison Monahan: It's not like the, is it the GMAT where like you get more points for harder questions.

Here it's like getting the easy one right counts every bit as much as the one that's like almost impossible for like the world's best LSAT tutor.

Nathan Fox: Exactly. Yeah. And so it, it really is kind of silly, especially if you're at the beginning of your prep or like you, if you were going to just do a two week crash course or one, one LSAT book. I would certainly not do the hardest ones. I would master the easy ones. So that you understand the nature of the question.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, I was like, well, I'll get bored if I have to do all of them, so I'll just focus on the hard ones, but that turned out to be kind of stupid.

Nathan Fox: Yeah, well, not the best.

Anyway, it worked out fine for you.

Alison Monahan: It worked out fine. I mean, basically I decided, I mean, I decided like if I got in the 170s, I wasn't taking it again. So I got a 170 and I moved on with my life. I mean, it worked out. All right, well, let's talk about some common misperceptions because actually I've just touched on something on your list.

I mean, I have to say, when you sent me this list, I was a bit surprised, because I would have actually thought all this stuff was true. So I'm going to give people your overview and then we can talk about each one. So these are Nathan's four major misperceptions or myths people have about the LSAT.

Number one, you should take it only once, which I was like, there's no way I'm doing this again. Number two, you actually need to finish the sections to score

well, which I would say I thought was totally obvious. You should closely monitor the time. Again, something I probably would have said like, Absolutely.

And that the logic games are hard, which I think the average person would probably say they are. So, I don't know, Nathan, I'm skeptical but give me your, give me your reasoning. Why should I, why is it a myth that I only need to take this once?

Nathan Fox: Sure this is old, outdated information. If you ever hear anyone say, oh, you should only take the LSAT once this is just misguided for a number of different reasons.

Here's the deal. If you take it once, like Alison did, and you score 170, great. You don't need to take it again. But if you take the LSAT and you score less than whatever you were scoring on your practice exams, And you should do practice exams. If you don't do practice exams, you're not ready, okay?

Alison Monahan: I mean, I might have just been deluded that really my true capabilities were higher than a 170 since I never actually took one.

Nathan Fox: No, if you would have prepped, if you would have done a bunch of tests, you would have been scoring 175 or higher, whatever.

Alison Monahan: Probably. I probably could have gotten more money if I'd done that. And you could have gotten more money, absolutely, yes.

Nathan Fox: Here's the deal.

Alison Monahan: So this may be like, I mean, I guess the LSAT at the bottom line is like, it's a pretty expensive mistake to screw this up potentially.

Nathan Fox: Oh, absolutely. We're talking about $150,000 worth of tuition.

Alison Monahan: All right. I'm not going to think about that. Let's just...

Nathan Fox: Yeah. Here's the, okay. Law schools, when they're doing admissions, they really only care about your highest LSAT score.

Alison Monahan: Right, this is different, right? Like, this has changed over time. They're not averaging them anymore.

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Nathan Fox: Many schools used to average. Some schools claimed that they would only take your first score no matter how many times you took it. But the American Bar Association, when they certify law schools, they look at LSAT scores for the incoming class to make sure that the schools are attracting a class of sufficient quality.

And when the ABA has the school's report numbers, the schools report the highest LSAT score for each member of the incoming class.

Alison Monahan: So basically, like, that's all they care about.

Nathan Fox: Well, no, they actually care more about the U.S. News World Report. U.S. News World Report they use LSAT scores as one of their factors for ranking law schools.

And U.S. News World Report, when they ask the schools to report the LSAT scores for the incoming class, They ask that the schools report the highest LSAT score for each member of the incoming class.

Alison Monahan: Right, and this, those are like, I mean, the U.S. News stuff is one of the really key reasons that you can get so much money for having a high LSAT, right?

Nathan Fox: Exactly. And, but it literally, if you took the test three times, and you got like 150, 150, 170, you're a 170 according to the ABA, and you're a 170 according to US News and World Report. So you're actually a better candidate. For those two factors anyway, you're a better candidate than the person who took it once and got a 169.

Alison Monahan: Right.

Nathan Fox: So, now I'm not telling people to intentionally take the test three times. I'm not saying, oh, take it unprepared, see how you do, maybe you do great. And if you don't do great, then you can prepare. That's not what I'm saying.

Alison Monahan: Right, I mean, sometimes you hear people say that and you're like, that seems really stupid.

Like, oh, just take it, you gotta get used to the experience.

Nathan Fox: It's horrible.

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Alison Monahan: It's like, if you're not prepared, you're not getting used to anything realistic anyway.

Nathan Fox: If you take an LSAT class, if you take a class, you can sit in a pool. proctored exam. It's a real practice test. It's a, it's actually an LSAT test.

You're sitting there shoulder to shoulder with a bunch of other nervous, sweaty people. It's a, it's the real experience, you know, and you can get that from an LSAT class. Why would you put a number on your permanent record that you're not happy with?

Alison Monahan: So I think it's potentially demoralizing for people like if nothing else.

Nathan Fox: Get prepared, get fully prepared for your first attempt.

And you'll know you're fully prepared when your practice test scores are scores that you would be happy with. Then when you take the test the first time, if you don't score what you were scoring on your practice test, then you should take it again. And, on the second attempt, if you don't score what you were scoring on your practice test, then you should take it again.

I have students who have taken it three times who are currently at Harvard Law. I have students who've taken it three times who are currently at Stanford Law. If Harvard and Stanford are good enough law schools for you, then taking it three times can, you know, should be part of your possible strategy.

It's like, hope for the best and plan for the worst, you know?

Alison Monahan: Right, I guess, I mean, that sort of brings up the question, how early should people start taking the test before they're planning to apply?

Nathan Fox: Well, I mean, Rowling Admissions says that they start accepting applications a full year in advance, right?

So they're accepting applications this September 1st. For next September 1st, 1L year you have to have your LSAT done before you can apply. Or, some schools will let you apply with your LSAT score pending but they're not going to evaluate your application until they see your LSAT score.

Alison Monahan: Well, and you don't really know where you should apply.

You have at least one score.

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Nathan Fox: Yeah, you're wasting money by applying to random schools. So to have your LSAT done before you apply, if you're going to apply a full year in advance, then yeah, you need to like work backward, right?

Alison Monahan: So basically you're saying like almost, I mean, more or less, almost a year before you plan to start applying, you need to sort of start taking this if you think you might need to do it more than once.

Nathan Fox: Yeah, if you're going to go straight from undergrad into law school, which, I'm not condoning that by any means. I mean, it works for some people. Some people are just born to be lawyers, and if that's you, great. You know, there's no point in it.

Alison Monahan: Yes, but we also encourage people to take some time off.

Nathan Fox: Sure, sure.

I would never try to talk anybody out of that, but Let's say you're, many people are not going to take our advice on that, right, Alison?

Alison Monahan: Absolutely, yeah. Something like 30 or 40 percent of people are coming straight out of undergrad.

Nathan Fox: Yeah, if you're going to listen to part of our advice, but not all of our advice, if you're going to go straight to law school right after your undergrad, you should be taking it no later than when you're a junior.

I mean, I love it when I see freshmen and sophomores LSAT classes. That's great. Like, there, you, there's no reason not to start your prep. And then you can start taking the LSAT as soon as your practice test scores reach what you think is, you know, kind of your peak. And, because your LSAT score, once you've taken it, is gonna last for three to five years.

Alison Monahan: Right.

Nathan Fox: Three years at some schools, five years at other schools. But, I just don't see why you wouldn't take it in your junior year or senior year. But, if you're taking it in your senior year, then you're definitely gonna take at least one gap year.

Alison Monahan: Right. So, yeah, maybe hold off. Alright, well, that's interesting.

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I mean, I think, yeah, I think the message is just, you know, take it until you either get the score that you're satisfied with or you realize you're never going to get that score.

Nathan Fox: Yeah, but please don't, please don't think that means that I want you to just go take the first attempt without, you know, take it cold or whatever.

Because that is just, that's like stepping to the plate with your shoes untied. You know, you do get three strikes.

Alison Monahan: Right.

Nathan Fox: But you should be ready to knock it out of the park on that first pitch. And if you do that, then you don't have to take it a second time.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, at some point it just becomes like a hassle in your life.

Like, you're spending time on this, you're spending money on this, you're getting stressed out about it. Like, the sooner you can finish this, the better.

Nathan Fox: Right, but, so, but your practice test scores are really good predictors of what you're capable of, right? I hate it when I see somebody who gets like 170, 170, 170 on their practice test.

And it gets 165 on the real thing and they just say, Oh, well, I'm tired. I'm done with it. I'm done.

Alison Monahan: Right, or like I have test anxiety or whatever. I'm just not good at like taking tests.

Nathan Fox: Those are, you know A lot of times that's people that don't understand math, right? Like they just don't understand that there's gonna be some randomness on the day of the test

Alison Monahan: Right. No, I mean, it's like what happened to me. If I'd gotten a different order of the sections and had, like, something easier on the last one, like, I probably would have done five points better.

Nathan Fox: Or if there wouldn't have been jackhammering outside the room while you were taking it.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, I mean, yeah, or whatever.

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Like, in retrospect, you know, had I had more time, I probably should have done it again, but whatever, it worked out. Alright, let's move on to number two. So, your argument is you don't actually need to finish the sections to score well. I mean, this seems kind of impossible to me, but maybe I'm a perfectionist.

Nathan Fox: To score 180, to score 175, to score 170, you probably have to finish the sections.

Alison Monahan: Okay, good.

Nathan Fox: But that's like 98th percentile. To score 170, you know, only 2 out of 100 people are going to actually score 170.

Alison Monahan: Right.

Nathan Fox: Also, the best way to get to 170 is to first score 165, and to score 160 before that, and to score 155 before that.

The vast majority of people listening are people who are trying to reach 150 or trying to reach 160.

Alison Monahan: Okay.

Nathan Fox: And you can reach both one 50 and one 60 without finishing any, without finishing any of the sections.

Alison Monahan: When you say not finish, I mean not finish how many questions?

Nathan Fox: However many. Here the, the test is basically when you do a practice test and you go back and look at your results, you just need to get the ones that you attempted, right.

Okay. That's the test. And so you should be thinking about missing no more than one in the first 10, maybe two in the first 15, maybe three in the first 20, but that's like almost a maximum. Okay. The people who score 170 just don't miss questions.

Alison Monahan: Right. No, I literally, a lot of sections I didn't miss any.

Nathan Fox: Right. And it'll, but the key is the long string of correct answers right at the beginning of the section. So. If you're trying to reach 140, you should be basically spending all your 35 minutes on the first 10. And if you're trying to

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reach 150, maybe you do the first 15. And if you're trying to reach 160, maybe you do the first 20.

Alison Monahan: Well, are the questions in order of sort of easy to hard, or is that random?

Nathan Fox: Yes, absolutely. So maybe this doesn't apply to the reading comprehension section, but it does absolutely apply to the games and to the logical reasoning. That the first logic game is almost always dramatically easier than the third or fourth logic game.

Alison Monahan: So this is kind of like an 80 20 situation. Like you're better off getting 80 percent of them completely correct than kind of like rushing through and missing a bunch.

Nathan Fox: Low hanging fruit is the metaphor that I use. You know, why are you going to bust out the- This is how you prepared, Alison. You went and got the 40 foot extension ladder and leaned it up precariously against the side of the orange tree and climbed all the way to the top rung on the ladder and tried to get those ones, you know.

Alison Monahan: You know, Nathan, that's just kind of how I roll.

Nathan Fox: Yeah, well, that's how you live. That's great. But, but meanwhile-

Alison Monahan: I mean, you're talking to someone who decided with her business partner that, hey, we can throw a conference in three months. That's nothing.

Nathan Fox: Wow, you guys can pull it off, right?

Alison Monahan: Barely, but it wasn't fun.

It was a bad idea.

Nathan Fox: It's a bit of a higher wire act, though, right?

Alison Monahan: Definitely.

Nathan Fox: For most students, and especially on the day when you actually sit and take your exam, you just don't even think about number 24. You need to be thinking about number 4.

Alison Monahan: Right.

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Nathan Fox: The earlier questions are dramatically easier, not a little bit easier.

I'm talking about, like, It's like twice as easy, ten times as easy as the later questions in the test. But they're all still just only worth one point.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, that seems like a weird way of scoring it, but okay.

Nathan Fox: That's how it is. So, the good news is It's like the easiest way to get to 150 is stop trying to finish the section.

Just slow down and focus on accuracy. It's like LSAT superpower.

Alison Monahan: Right, and this kind of leads into the third one, which is you're saying you don't really need to closely monitor the time.

Nathan Fox: Right, most people, you know, people even buy like these stupid special LSAT watches that they bring into the test.

Alison Monahan: Yes, I know which one you're referring to.

Nathan Fox: It only has 35 minutes on it, you know, and it resets back to zero. It's like, that is the just antithesis of my whole philosophy of the LSAT. Because that's training people to be in a hurry. It's training people to be doing, you know, now you're doing math in your head, right? You're like, there's no math on the LSAT, but you are checking after every question or after every page, or maybe you're only checking once or twice during the section.

I still say you're wasting time, because what you're doing is, well, I've completed 10 questions, but, oh shit! I've, there's been 20 minutes elapsed, and I was supposed to have 85 seconds per question, but now there's only 15 minutes left, and I have still 15 questions, so now it's, well, that's easy math. It's only, now I only have one minute per question, and then, now what are you gonna do, okay?

You're gonna now start rushing? Well, that's how you miss the easier questions.

Alison Monahan: Right, and you're gonna get panicked, which, you know, I mean, in severe cases can cause people's brains to totally blank out and that kind of thing, which is definitely not helpful.

Nathan Fox: I actually encourage my students on the day of the test to not even bring a watch with them.

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I would love it if you don't even bring a watch with you. Because, the proctor, that's the proctor's only job, is to run the clock, and by the way, all the other students in the room, if the proctor messes up,

Alison Monahan: Someone is gonna know.

Nathan Fox: All the other students in the room, no, they all are going to know, because they're all, you know how it is, it's like law school people, right?

So it's all just a bunch of-

Alison Monahan: They're going to be like, oh no, we get another minute and a half.

Nathan Fox: Exactly, and so let them manage that process for you, your job, it's very simple, and I actually have a really easy strategy for how to pull this off. is when the proctor says five minutes, because you do get a five minute warning, right?

When the proctor says five minutes, that's when you just go ahead and bubble in a guess for every question remaining in the section. So you've already worked for 35, 30 minutes and you've gotten a ton of questions correct and now you're on question 17 or 18 or 19 or 20 or whatever. The proctor says five minutes, just go ahead and bubble in all A's or all B's or all C's or all D's or whatever for All the remaining questions in the section.

That takes you all of 15 seconds. Now you have 4 minutes and 45 seconds remaining and you spend that time just carefully answering one more question, maybe two more questions. And now, when the proctor says time's up, you can just drop your pencil without any fear of, you know, the proctor busting you for doing something after time has been called.

Alison Monahan: Right, I think this actually has a lot to do with all this research that people do on multitasking. So, you know, if you're, I liked your example, you know, if you're constantly, if you're trying to do the math of like, oh, 85 seconds times 7, is like, you know, not only are you panicking at that point, but like, I can't do that in my head.

And so then my brain is like switched into this mode of like, well, how much time blah blah, it's like, you just need to be focused on the test. Like the time is what it is. There's nothing you can do about it about that point.

Nathan Fox: You can't do more than one question at once and you can't do a question while you're thinking about the math of how much time you have remaining or while

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you're hurrying or while you're, like, looking at the proctor to see if the proctor is about to call time, you know, that's not answering the question. So you got to be realistic and you got to just, because what I see, I mean, and this is amazing, the, after five minutes, if I take like a complete novice and I watch them during the test, and if I watch where, what question they were on when I said five minutes, and then I score them for the remaining five, you know, if I just look at the questions that they did after five minutes was called, The typical novice is no better than random guessing in that last five minutes.

Like, they literally, they, all they do is skim the questions and they fall into the first easiest trap, and they miss that question. And then they miss another one the same way, and they miss another one the same way, and it's like, you know, you got one question right out of five questions remaining that you did during that last five minutes, which is the exact same as you would have gotten if you would have randomly guessed.

Alison Monahan: Right, so you may as well have just filled in C, like taken a little mental breather, like, you know, looked around for a while and moved on.

Nathan Fox: Yeah, or, Maybe you could have actually done two of the questions and gotten them both right.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, basically like fill, I know, I think the strategy is good of like, you know, get, get your 25 percent by just marking, you know, A, B, C, or D, whatever.

And then try to actually improve it a little bit.

Nathan Fox: Yeah, I like to tell students that the questions they don't attempt are actually free points, right?

Alison Monahan: Right.

Nathan Fox: You're going to get one out of five of those right because there's five answer choices. So it's like you're getting one fifth of a point for free every time you bubble in a guess.

So guess, at the end of the section, on the really hardest ones, and you'll still get one out of five of them right, And then invest that time that you save back into making sure that you get the earlier, easier ones right.

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Alison Monahan: Alright, good to know. Alright, finally, you're going to argue the logic games are not hard, which I think is going to be anathema to many of the people listening to this, so tell me why.

Nathan Fox: Yeah, that's a, I mean, that's the impression that most people get when they first take the test, is that the logic games-

Alison Monahan: Well, because they seem really hard when you first look at them.

Nathan Fox: Well, what are they? I mean, they're, they're this weird kind of puzzle that no one has ever done in their lives.

The reading comprehension is really familiar. Logical reasoning is not unfamiliar, even for a complete novice. It's like, read some words and answer a question. Okay, I can do that. . But when I look at a logic game and it's like seven clowns getting out of a clown car, and what order are the clowns and the red clown, and by the way, I'm afraid of clowns and you know, it's just like-

Alison Monahan: It's what is this?

Nathan Fox: What is this? And so, people just on the first night of class, I'm, I guess I'm gonna say sadist, I don't know. But people just crash and burn so hard on the very first night. And I, I just kind of tell them, listen, we're gonna crash and burn together. And then, you're gonna be amazed, though, by the time the class is over, you're gonna be amazed at how easy this stuff actually was.

Every class I've ever taught, I keep stats, you know, on the scores from the first night of class. Every class I've ever taught is worst at the logic games. But, logic games is also the section where people score perfectly more often than any other section of the test, it's also the section where people improve their scores the most dramatically.

The best candidate for improvement is a student who scores really high on the reading comprehension. and really low on the logic games on the first night of class. If that's you, then you can definitely improve your LSAT score by a lot.

Alison Monahan: Right, and I think the point about if you're going to get part of the logic game right, you're probably going to get all of it right, is a good one.

It's like, once you see it, it's just not that hard. You know, once you have, once you have your chart laid out or however you do it, like, if you get, it's sort of, sort of like civil procedure. Like, once everything clicks into place, it all makes sense.

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Nathan Fox: Yep. If you understand each rule individually. And then you start to see how the rules intertwine, the questions have, you know, the, the difference on the logical reason, on the logic games, different a difference about the logic games is that there is one single objectively correct answer and four objectively wrong answers. Like a computer could solve the logic games.

Alison Monahan: Oh, easily.

Nathan Fox: But you can't say the same thing for logical reasoning and reading comprehension.

Like we were talking about earlier, there will be a question on the Logical Reasoning where, on the Logical Reasoning they're asking, they're asking you to pick the best answer. And so there's an inherently subjective thing there, right?

Alison Monahan: Yeah.

Nathan Fox: On the games, there is the answer, and there are the four wrong answers.

Alison Monahan: Right, and it's like once you get one of the answers, usually the other ones kind of click into place, and you're like, Okay, I can move through the rest of these pretty quickly.

Nathan Fox: Because you see how the system works, you see how the game works, you realize that, oh, it sounded complicated to begin with, but there's maybe, maybe you recognize, oh, well there's really only kind of like this template and this other template, there's kind of two main ways to do this game.

If you start to see that, then you start to just knock out the questions. The one main piece of advice that I would give for people on the games is that you need to focus on getting every single question right in just one game. Like, don't skim all four games and half ass all four games and go back and forth and get half the points on each game.

Instead, spend, if you're a complete novice, Spend all 35 minutes just making sure that you've gotten them all correct on game number one. And if you, if you get to that point with time remaining, then by all means, move on to game two and spend the remainder of your time just making sure that you're getting all of them right on game two.

Your accuracy should be highest on the games. On the questions you attempt on the games, you should never miss questions.

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Alison Monahan: Yeah, I think that actually makes a lot of sense. I mean, it's sort of counterintuitive. But, I mean, the reality is, if you're not getting them all right, you're probably not getting any of them right.

Nathan Fox: Yeah, and if you're getting half of them right, and you're thinking like, Oh, you know, a student will be like, yeah, I'm doing pretty good on the games, you know, I only missed one on the first game, and I missed two on the second game, and I missed two on the third game. Well, I'm like, you're making it so hard on yourself, because what you should do is you should slow down and just figure out every single question.

Once you figure out that the answer to question number seven absolutely has to be B and cannot possibly be any of the other answer choices, then you start to realize, oh, shit, this is actually kind of easy.

Alison Monahan: Yeah.

Nathan Fox: You see that, and then that's where the really dramatic improvements later will come from.

Alison Monahan: I thought they were kind of fun, but I obviously just thought I was sort of a freak, so.

Nathan Fox: No, well, hey, if you're going to law school, you better be kind of a freak, or else, you know, you're probably in the wrong line of business, but.

Alison Monahan: It's true.

Nathan Fox: Sure, the games are fun. They're games. I mean, if you were stuck in an airport, and you needed some entertainment, you didn't have a book, your phone was dead, and the bar was closed, a book of logic games would be awesome.

Because it would be something to do, you know, something, you can figure them out and they're kind of satisfying little puzzles that you can solve.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, you're like, yeah, I understand it. I know, I know what color the clown nose is that got in that blue car with his friend who had the red hat on.

Yeah, I got it.

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Nathan Fox: Yeah, exactly. I would go so far as to say that if, you know, that you, you have to get to a point where the games are fun. If you don't get to a point where the games are fun, you're going to have a hard time with the LSAT.

Alison Monahan: Oh, I mean, I wouldn't say fun, like on game day, no pun intended, but.

Nathan Fox: Well, I, yeah, I mean-

Alison Monahan: At least like relatively tolerable and somewhat interesting is probably about as far as I'd go.

Nathan Fox: It'd be awful nice if you could get to a point, and because many students do, you know, students start off with games as their worst section, and then they end up with games as the section that they look forward to. It'll be like a breather.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, because I think it's also the most teachable. Like, a lot of it is just technique.

Nathan Fox: Absolutely. I mean, people can end up scoring perfectly on the games with 15 minutes remaining on the clock. You know, and that, that never ever happens on the other sections.

Alison Monahan: No, definitely not. Alright, well, unfortunately we're about out of time tell me if people want to learn more about Fox LSAT and what you do, where can they go to do that?

Nathan Fox: So FoxLSAT.com has all the information about my classes, I have an online program that's on demand, you can do it from anywhere in the world. I tutor via Skype like 90% of my tutoring now is on Skype, which is awesome because I can work with students around the world.

Alison Monahan: No, well, I mean, basically 100% of our law school and bar exam tutoring, which we offer as an option is on Skype.

We don't do any in person.

Nathan Fox: Oh, any, that's, that's nice. I haven't gone so far, but I, I do have, you know, even like when I'm in San Francisco, I'll have a student in Oakland and they'll just be like, Ah, nah, I don't want to come to San Francisco, let's do it on Skype.

Alison Monahan: I feel that way. The traffic in San Francisco, we're like, you're in San Francisco, the tutor's in San Francisco.

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Nope, still virtual.

Nathan Fox: Traffic in San Francisco is nothing compared to traffic in L.A. I'm in I'm in San Francisco and L.A., by the way. I'm teaching live classes in both San Francisco and Los Angeles. I go back and forth. But FoxLSAT.Com is where you can learn about all of that.

Alison Monahan: Alright, and tell me a little bit about this Thinking LSAT podcast.

Nathan Fox: Oh man, Thinking LSAT podcast is great. I run it with my buddy Ben Olson. He has his own business called Strategy Prep in Washington, D. C. He teaches live classes in Washington, D.C. And we started it last, let's see, it's been a, coming up on two years.

Alison Monahan: In fact, you were the reason we started the Law School Toolbox podcast.

Nathan Fox: Yeah, well, I mean, the reason why I started the Thinking LSAT podcast is because of a poker podcast that I used to listen to. Or no, I still listen to it, actually. I don't play poker, but I still listen to it because it's a great podcast called the Thinking Poker Podcast.

Alison Monahan: So you just totally ripped off-

Nathan Fox: I just totally ripped off the name.

Yep, it's an homage. And so yeah, we've got 56 episodes or something. All of our episodes go, like, an hour and a half, you know.

Alison Monahan: And what do you guys do? Like, you go through questions or what?

Nathan Fox: Yeah, we do real LSAT questions, but we also talk a lot about law school admissions. We talk about general section strategy.

We have guests.

You should come on, Alison.

Alison Monahan: Sure, why not?

Nathan Fox: Yeah we do All sorts of stuff. Give it a listen. It's ThinkingLSAT.com and it's the Thinking LSAT podcast on iTunes.

Alison Monahan: And we'll also link to that in the show notes. Unfortunately, go ahead.

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Nathan Fox: Sorry, just one more thing. You can also tweet me. I'm @NFox.

So that's a good way to reach out to me questions that you'd like answered on the podcast or whatever. I'll respond to you.

Alison Monahan: Awesome. Well, thank you so much, Nathan. We really appreciate you stopping by, and thanks to everyone for listening. If you enjoyed this episode, we would love to have a review and rating on iTunes.

We definitely appreciate it. And be sure to subscribe so you don't miss anything. We typically release new episodes on Mondays. And if you have any questions or comments, you can reach out to me at Alison@LawSchoolToolbox.com, or you can always contact us via our website contact form at LawSchoolToolbox.com. Again, you can find Nathan at FoxLSAT.com or on Twitter @NFox. I got that right this time. And be sure to check out his podcast, which sounds awesome, and I've heard really good things about it. So thanks for listening, we'll talk soon, and good luck getting that LSAT score that you seek!