



Lee Burgess: Welcome to the Bar Exam Toolbox podcast. Today we are talking about the best way to study for the bar exam if you are a visual learner. You're Bar Exam Toolbox hosts are Alison Monahan and Lee Burgess. That's me. We're here to demystify the bar exam experience, so you can study effectively, stay sane, and hopefully pass and move on with your life. We're the co-creators of the [Law School Toolbox](#), the [Bar Exam Toolbox](#), and there career-related website, [CareerDicta](#). Alison also runs [The Girls' Guide to Law School](#).

If you enjoy the show, please leave a review on your favorite listening app, and check out our sister podcast, the [Law School Toolbox podcast](#). If you have any questions, don't hesitate to reach out to us. You can reach us via the [contact form](#) on BarExamToolbox.com, and we'd love to hear from you. And with that, let's get started.

Welcome back. Today we are talking about how to study best for the bar exam if you are a visual learner. So, Alison, what does it mean to be a visual learner?

Alison Monahan: Well, as someone who is definitely a visual learner ...

Lee Burgess: It was a nice punt to you, since you are a visual learner, why don't you ...

Alison Monahan: Yeah, so, I'm actually a very visual learner. I mean, it's probably not an accident that I went to architecture school. I've been trained in design, and all these very visual media that probably doesn't immediately seem relevant to law school or the bar exam, but the reality is, if you're a visual learner, things like images, pictures, color, and other types of visual media really work best to help you learn and memorize. So, for me, people would laugh at me in law school, because I spent time drawing pictures, or I'd spend time coloring my notes, or doing these really detailed colored flow charts. And it wasn't what worked for other people, but it was what worked for me.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. I think I'm kind of in the middle. I'm a little visual and a little auditory. I kind of float in between the middle. But you are definitely much more visual than I am. I've seen what you did in high school.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, exactly. And I think it is important to realize, too, you're not one or the other, typically.

Lee Burgess: Right.

Alison Monahan: Everyone combines all of these different ways to learn, and so one of the things we're thinking about, in terms of studying for the bar, is hey, you're allowed to play to your strengths, and you probably should, but it also might depend what type of information you're working with, whether it's a certain topic, or a certain subject matter area. Certain areas lend themselves more or less to



certain types of learning, so just because you think, I'm a visual learner, doesn't mean you always have to be doing drawings, you always have to be doing diagrams, or maybe other things that work just fine.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, that's true. So, there are ways that you can figure out if you're a visual learner. There are some [online tests](#) you can take, which we will link to in the show notes. But I think it's also important to think about, maybe, your experience in law school. Were reading and writing really your academic strengths? Were you easily distracted in class when people were talking, by looking out the window, or looking around at what others are doing around you?

Alison Monahan: Oh my gosh, other people's laptops were the worst for me. I literally had to basically sit in the front row, because looking at what other people are doing on their laptops was incredibly distracting.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. And then, I think it behooves you to really think through this stuff going into your bar program, because no matter how you decide to prepare, whether you're doing a big commercial course, or you're studying on your own, you want to be very conscious about where you are studying and how you're spending your time. So, if you work well in libraries and quiet spaces, where you're not going to be so distracted, then that's also something to be very cognizant of, and it also might mean that your learning style leans towards this visual learner learning style.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. I mean, for me, too, I can study in a quiet library, but I'm also a person who can study, and actually quite effectively, in a place with a little bit more background. I actually study really well in a coffee shop, for example, with a lot of ambient noise. That might drive other people crazy. For me, I don't know, it's weird. I remember one time I was studying, I think at a tea place we used to go all the time before it shut.

Lee Burgess: Samovar? Yeah.

Alison Monahan: Samovar in San Francisco. They had these big glass windows, and I thought, I really need to focus. I'm going to turn my attention away from the window and really focus. And I found myself actually getting really anxious. I was like, why is this happening? And I turned around, and just the passersby and the background stuff was enough to somehow calm my brain down. I don't know, it's weird. I think the point is, this is the bar exam. You do whatever works for you. Nobody cares how you prepare.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. And I am definitely one of those people who is better off in a quiet room in the library, where I don't see a lot of other people working. Especially if a type of studying, something that's not particularly interesting to me. If it's something



I'm interested and engaged in, I can basically do that work anywhere. But the bar exam is pretty boring sometimes. Let's just be honest.

Alison Monahan: But, I mean, I spent a lot of time studying for the bar exam in coffee shops, actually.

Lee Burgess: Yeah.

Alison Monahan: Because I always went crazy just sitting in my house alone.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. I definitely don't study at home. I like to go somewhere, a library, or some place where it's away from home. It's just really important to think about your triggers, where your distraction trigger is, what makes it easy for you to focus, and embrace that, because you don't want to waste your study time when you're on the bar exam. I think that's pretty important.

Alison Monahan: Right. And also, you don't need to make it harder than it needs to be. For example, if you're a visual learner, probably seeing the material is going to help you learn it. So, you're not just going to sit and listen to someone tell you about this. I noticed this in my Spanish class. If my tutor just tells me something, and he thinks that he's explaining it, I'm like, okay, yeah, I understand the subjunctive, and then it basically leaves my head as soon as I leave the room.

But if I sit down and write things out, even this exact same stuff he told me aloud, or even words, I just need to see them written, and it sticks better in my brain. So, if that's you, play to that strength, and we're going to offer a lot of different recommendations soon, but one of them is really just writing things down.

Lee Burgess: Right, and I think for me, when I was memorizing things for the bar exam, I would write mine all in condensed outlines, because it was easier to memorize something that I created, and even though it didn't have any amazing content to it, there was just something about that little bit of, it came from my brain, it came out of my hand, and I then I can visualize those outlines in a way that I couldn't if something was handed to me. So, that became a really good use of my study time.

Alison Monahan: Right, and I think, also you can think about ways, for example, when you say that you visualize it, some people, for example, will use a different color font when then are looking at distinctions. So, if you're looking at the California versus the Federal rules of evidence, or professional responsibility, whatever it is, if you're consistent with the way you use a font color, you might literally see that on the exam and be like, that's red, okay, I know that that's California, or whatever it is.



- Lee Burgess: Yeah. No, I think that's really true. And it's likely in your outlines in law school that you played with some of these ideas, unless you weren't successful in law school, then you may want to explore some new ideas.
- Alison Monahan: Right, and I think sometimes there's pressure in law school if you are a visual learner, which is probably not the most common learning style. There's pressure to do these massive outlines that you type on the computer, and you may have found that that didn't work for you so well, but you also may have felt pressured to continue doing it. So, if you found a different approach that really works better, definitely go for it, and if not, here's a great time to explore.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah, because nobody knows how you study for the bar exam, just if you pass or fail.
- Alison Monahan: No one cares.
- Lee Burgess: Nobody cares. All right, so let's go through [some specific recommendations](#). We've already started talking a little bit about outlines, but definitely having some sort of written document is one option that you want to look at. This could be a condensed outline you created either from some of your notes in your classes that you took, although I think studying off of some canned bar materials can be better because the substantive material that can be tested on the bar exam can be different than what your professors chose to cover. So, it's probably a good idea to use some material from some reputable bar source as an outline to start with, especially if you're not going to use one of the big commercial providers.
- Alison Monahan: Right, I think that's right. I mean, you've got to start some place. I think making that your own as quickly as possible, and really condensing it, and maybe using colors, or arrows, or whatever, is to link the stuff together is just going to help you learn it a lot faster.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah, or handwriting, always my favorite, because I like that you can draw arrows and use colors.
- Alison Monahan: I really feel like if you're a visual learner, you almost certainly should be handwriting your outlines.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah. I think that's probably a good idea. I still have ... I was just going through my bookcase the other day, and I found my bar binder with all of my handwritten notes. I've moved like, a bazillion times since the bar exam, which was many years ago at this point, but I think it's really ... Now I feel like I can't get rid of it. I mean, it isn't worth anything. It's really outdated.



- Alison Monahan: I have a bunch of stuff from my law school classes, and I'll tell you what, actually, they're still useful.
- Lee Burgess: Totally.
- Alison Monahan: I had an amazing flowchart that I made in contracts, and in three pages, I covered the entire subject.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah.
- Alison Monahan: And I'm like, I can do a pretty decent contracts analysis if you put that in front of me. It's simplified, it tells you what questions to ask, and shows you some resources if you need to go back to a section of the code, or whatever. It's a great flowchart. There's no reason to throw it away.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah. I also had a lot of success around outlines to memorizing lists, like writing out lists. Coming up with, basically, let's say, around hearsay. You have a list of all the hearsay sections, and then it was easier. Sometimes I have a mnemonic for them. Sometimes I could just memorize the first letter, it was just the order, like AACB. I don't know why I can memorize that, but if you tell me your name, I'm like, what's your name? But I found that I could memorize lists in that way, and easily retrieve them.
- So, you also want to think about ways that you can condense this material down into some easily recallable forms, and I think that that's important to play with as well when you're making these materials for yourself, because you want them to be in such a way that it makes sense to your brain, and then you can recall that information.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, I think that's right. I mean, you want, if you get a question on evidence, it's great if you can just immediately write down a very, very brief list of the hearsay exceptions, and then you'll be like, I know what to look for.
- Lee Burgess: Right.
- Alison Monahan: Something like that is pretty likely to show up, and obviously, you probably can't do this for every single legal rule, but for the major legal rules, you're almost certain if the subject matter comes up, will probably come up, like what are the degrees of homicide, that kind of thing. That's pretty likely to appear in a criminal essay.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah, I was able to memorize an overall structure for contracts, which is kind of my attack plan for contracts. Basically, all potential issues that can come up in contracts. I basically had this sketched outline that I did on my scratch paper, so I could go through and just be like, yes, talk about, no, talk talk about, yes, talk



about, no, talk talk about. And it was very helpful when you're in a question, you're scratching your head a little bit, going, what are all these possible issues? And you can just quickly go through, check the ones that apply, and then you have your organization right there.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, exactly, and there are lots of condensed outlines you can start with, too. One thing I would warn people about, if you are a very visual learner, sometimes the level of abbreviations can be maddening.

Lee Burgess: Yeah.

Alison Monahan: For me, I just couldn't stand abbreviations, because they looked bad to me, or they just looked weird. My brain just didn't like them, so I knew I would have to write out everything. So, if you look at something like [Lean Sheets](#), which has a lot of great information, but you might look at it and be like, "Too many abbreviations." But then you can use that to make your own. You're allowed to write out the words. It's fine.

Lee Burgess: And what I think a lot of people don't think about when they get into, like, a Lean Sheets, is that if there is a section of one subject that is too condensed, or has too many abbreviations, or something like that, you can just work on that one section. I think sometimes people get into this idea that they start ... This section is too condensed, so I need to redo the whole outline. And I don't think that's a great use of your time. You should just be evaluating, saying, okay, I like the way I did this, but this isn't enough for me, so you expand it. You take another sheet of paper, you put it behind that one with a note to yourself, and that's how you do it. Don't recreate the wheel for stuff that's already working, but make sure you're spending time creating your own materials, so that it can be meaningful for you.

Alison Monahan: Right. And also, a lot of this material, ideally, you probably already know.

Lee Burgess: Yeah.

Alison Monahan: So, if you're looking at something like torts or contracts, you've studied this before. You probably know a lot of the material. And there will be certain areas that you're going to really need to brush up on, and those are what you need to focus on, not the places where you're already pretty solid.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. So, outside of these kind of outlines, we've been talking about, you can also create diagrams and visual images, which is some of the diagrams and flowcharts you were talking about, and this is something you used a lot in law school for the bar. The nice thing about these types of materials is they're very freeform. So, you can do flowcharts with pictures, or symbols, or graphics. You



can even do them on white paper without lines, so you don't feel constrained to the line.

Alison Monahan: Oh my god, there's no way I could ... You absolutely cannot have paper with lines on it if you're doing that.

Lee Burgess: No, definitely not. You know what's funny, my high school math tutor, when I was in high school, I think it was for pre-calculus or something like that, but she was dead set on the fact that you could not use paper with lines to do math. She was like, "That's the worst thing in the world. You need no lines, so you have freeform thinking. You need to be able to cross things out, and you can't have these constraints when doing math."

Alison Monahan: Well, I mean, I think there's a lot to that, actually. Another way that can work for people is whiteboarding. Any time I have to do something challenging, I almost always get out the whiteboard. And this sounds crazy, but it is actually, you need to think about what kind of paper you're using. We like our [Circa notebooks](#), and one of the advantages there is that they have lined paper, they have unlined paper. And it doesn't sound like it would matter, but it would really bother me to actually draw a flowchart on paper that had lines on it. I just couldn't do it.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. And I have had students who have been able to use whiteboards to create some visual representations for themselves, and then that is something they can memorize and reference back. You and I have also used those poser boards that are like post-its. I've had students in the past who do those, and if they have a room in their house they're studying in or something, sometimes they'll put some of those attack plans and things on the wall, using those post-its.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, you could do a whole wall of post-it notes. I've seen people do that before. Anything you can move around like that, I feel would be effective for a visual learner.

Lee Burgess: And if anybody ... Oh, go ahead.

Alison Monahan: I was going to say, part of it is, you feel constrained by a typed outline, because you can't see everything at once.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. If somebody does an amazing collage of flowcharts on their wall, will you please take a picture and send it to us? That would be amazing.

Alison Monahan: Please, please.

Lee Burgess: We won't necessarily publish it, it would just make us really happy.



- Alison Monahan: Yeah. But I think there's something about that ability to move things around, and look at them in relation to each other, that can be really effective. Oftentimes, what I'll do is, I'll work out a problem, or work out an area on something like a whiteboard, and then basically preserve it for later by making, say, a more traditional outline, or something. But there's something about the way that your brain is working usually, where you need to be able to see the pieces and move them around to really understand how they relate to each other.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah. The outline form can be very constraining, and this can be frustrating, and if you're feeling frustrated by that, abandon it. Move away.
- Alison Monahan: Just get rid of it. You don't need it. It's fine.
- Lee Burgess: I do think, with bar study, though ... We were talking about using colors to map distinctions and things like that. But if you do have some sort of color coding scheme, I think that's wise, so as you visually memorize things, you remember that distinctions are in red, or something like that, so you don't do one set of outlines and flowcharts where distinctions are red, and the next time they're green, and the next time they're blue. I don't think that you want that inconsistency. I think you want to decide, this is how I'm going to do this consistently throughout my bar materials. Even if they don't look the same, they can have some of that formatting to trigger your memory.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, absolutely, and things like structure, too. I had a certain way that I structured my handwritten outlines, with a box around the key topic area, and then I would color it in. Stuff like that, which people think is a total waste of time, let me tell you. But it's not, because that's how you're making sense of the material, and it's also how you're going to be able to recall it later. And if it works for you, it works for you, and do not listen to anyone else.
- Lee Burgess: No. If anybody thinks your outlines are crazy, it doesn't matter. As long as you memorize the material, it doesn't matter.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, I mean, I would do drawings. For example, my one in torts class, we had to memorize, say, 30 cases. And I did little drawings of each one, and people were like, "Oh my gosh, I can't believe you're drawing. This is law school." And I'm like, "Okay, can you tell me from this case name what this case is about? Because I can glance at this and tell you exactly what it's about."
- Lee Burgess: Right, totally. It's like, who's judging now?
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, like, okay, you do you. Do whatever you want. But this is actually pretty effective.



- Lee Burgess: Yep. You can also consider connecting [visual images or diagrams](#) to real life examples, and use those in your notes. It could be drawing a picture, but it also could be reminding yourself of a story, something you saw on the news.
- Alison Monahan: You could do a vision board. You could get out your magazines and tear up whatever you need, your Vogue.
- Lee Burgess: It's true. Yeah. So, things that you remember from class. If your professor had a really compelling way to talk about a rule in class, real life examples. But any time you can come up with these kind of visual connections from these stories and real life examples, you're more likely to put this information more into your long term memory, and that's going to be significant, because although there are a lot of people who say, "Just memorize all your material in the last couple weeks of the bar exam," there's a lot to memorize. If you can push some of this stuff into your brain before that, that's all the better. All the better.
- Alison Monahan: Right, and also you can think about things like [spaced repetition](#). You start trying to memorize pretty far in advance, but you make sure that once a week, or every few days, you're going back to the things you already know, and that's going to get that much deeper into your memory than something that you've only tried to memorize once, a week before the test.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah, exactly. And if you struggle with anxiety at all, you don't want to leave that memorization to the end, because as your anxiety goes up, your information retention often goes down, and so that can be very, very triggering. So, you want to move that prep to be slow and steady wins the race, so you're not cramming at the end, because it's not going to help you feel confident going into the test.
- Alison Monahan: Right, and memorization is one of those things that tends to trigger anxiety in almost everyone, so if that is something that you're prone to, you just know it's going to be the worst.
- Lee Burgess: Yes. Something else we've written about on the blog as well, that I know students have used, is [memory palaces](#).
- Alison Monahan: Love the memory palace, too.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah, I wanted to talk about what the memory palace is. It's a great name, no matter what.
- Alison Monahan: Right. One of my architecture school professors actually wrote a book called "Chambers" for a memory palace, but I'm not exactly sure it has that much to do with this. But it's a good book. It's very interesting. So, the idea here, and this is actually something that people have used for hundreds, if not thousands, of



years. This is what the people who are telling the story of "The Odyssey" out loud back in the day were using to remember everything.

Basically, you create a three-dimensional space, and then you imagine yourself in that space, whether you're walking through it, whether you're moving things around, whether you're just looking. And so, objects can take on some aspect of a rule, or something like that, that you need to memorize.

And one of the things ... One of the places, one of the companies that does this sort of thing is [Sketchy Law](#).

Lee Burgess: Sketchy Law.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. I'm like, Smart Law. No, Sketchy Law. So, they have actually created some of these for you for various topics, and if it sounds interesting, I think they're really, they can be extremely useful.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. I mean, you can use other folks' memory palaces, or you can come up with your own to memorize all of this material. And so, there can be lots of examples. Here's one idea. You're studying the statute of frauds, and you might imagine that you're nervous, and so your legs are bouncing up and down.

Alison Monahan: Or you might actually be nervous.

Lee Burgess: Or you might actually be nervous. And so, you remember that contracts fall under the statute of frauds, because your leg is bouncing up and down, you think of the MY LEGS won't stop bouncing. So, every time you see statute of frauds, you have this image about MY LEGS won't stop bouncing, and then you can remember that M is for marriage, Y is for contracts greater than a year, L is for sales of land contracts, E is for executive contracts, and G is for guaranteed contracts, lastly, S is for sales of goods over \$500 or more. And you could also associate different parts of your legs with these type of contracts. You could be holding something while you're bouncing. It would have more meaning. But you can get a little creative to trigger this image that can allow you to organize this information in your head, without just having to recall some random list.

Alison Monahan: Right, because if you're like, what are the requirements of the statute of frauds? I have no idea. Okay, MY LEGS, even that, you're like, maybe I won't remember that part. But when you link it to that memory of a physical action, then it's like, okay, the statue of frauds, my leg was moving. Oh, yeah, right, MY LEGS. Okay, the M is blah, blah, blah, It's actually pretty powerful.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. And this is something you might have to play with a little bit to get in the groove for yourself about what will work for you, but I think using this imagery is very powerful when you're trying to memorize things, and people who



memorize a lot for a living have to come up with these tricks to memorize the order of things, and it's not just people taking their bar exams. Singers remembering songs, and stuff like that.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. Just think about how much more context a three-dimensional image that you imagine walking in has, than just a list on a page.

Lee Burgess: Right.

Alison Monahan: This is one one of our tutors came up with. I don't know if they came up with it, but I think they read an article, it sounds like, Moonwalking Through the Bar Exam, which talks about a book, "Moonwalking with Einstein," on how to use these techniques. So, this one is a little crazy, but just to give you an example ...

Lee Burgess: That's all right.

Alison Monahan: All right, so, imagine your childhood bedroom. Are we all there?

Lee Burgess: Yes.

Alison Monahan: Okay. Now, in that bedroom, imagine stand up comedian Richard Pryor in a jail cell, watching a movie screen, wearing a perfectly tailored red suit. You can almost envision him. Waving a sparking magic wand in one hand, and holding Sigmund Freud's severed head in the other. At this point, you're probably like, what are we talking about?

The explanation, which may or may not work for you, but apparently worked for the person who wrote this, is that the prior restraint is Richard Pryor. Pryor, prior restraint, in a jail cell, restraint. It is the advanced screening, the movie screen of speech, which is disfavored unless the law is narrowly tailored, so that's his perfectly tailored suit, to a compelling, magic wants compel action, or at least significant, Sigmund Freud ... That's the one I would probably forget ... government interest. But, whatever. If Sigmund Freud doesn't work for you, it could be your significant other.

Lee Burgess: Yeah.

Alison Monahan: The point is not that you memorize this particular one. The point is that already, you're imagining, okay, I know more about prior restraints, and maybe I'll actually remember this.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. And any time you have something to trigger things in your brain like that, it's amazing the amount of retention you can have. I'm sitting here with this image. I'm like, I'm remembering that image, that we've just conjured up.



- Alison Monahan: Yeah, now I'm like, Richard Pryor in the jail cell. Okay, prior restraint. Got it.
- Lee Burgess: And you can also think that outside of memorizing these kind of techniques, visualization to train your brain to do things is use in hypnosis therapy, and a lot of different guided meditations, and things like that.
- Alison Monahan: Olympic athletes.
- Lee Burgess: Olympic athletes. The idea that you're connecting your thoughts or your memories to these sort of visual representations is really critical, and it's something that's so common. I was watching the Olympics, the winter Olympics, and if you watch the skiers do the visualization before they go down the runs ... I don't know, did you see any of this? I don't know how much of the Olympics you got to see.
- Alison Monahan: I did see, actually. I saw ... Yeah. I didn't see the visualization part.
- Lee Burgess: Okay. But they're standing there, and they have their ... You can't see their eyes are closed, because they've got goggles on, but they're standing there with their bodies, and they are really, from memory, doing the run. And the runs aren't very long, so you can see, they're doing the turns, and they've got the run memorized, and it's really impressive when you think about it, that they are able to visualize the entire run before they do it. And I was like, wow, that's a very specific memory that they've had to implant in their brain pretty quickly, because they may have done a couple of training runs on those runs.
- Alison Monahan: But interestingly, I think, some of the runs they were not even allowed training runs.
- Lee Burgess: That's true. Yeah.
- Alison Monahan: So, they had really never skied this course before, and they're trying to imagine themselves skiing it based on other information, and then they go out there and execute. It's pretty impressive.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah, they were getting reports on the course from other people who had gone down it, and then they were imagining the visualization. Pretty amazing stuff. So, the more you can play with your brain about how you best recall this information, using what's worked for you in the past, could really make or break your bar prep. I mean, for me, I used to do a lot of singing. I don't know how I still have whole entire songs memorized from being, like, 16.
- Alison Monahan: Well, that's the thing, too. Imagine all the songs that are in your brain from your lifetime, that you have made basically no effort, in many cases, to remember. And you know all the words, all the tune, you can sing it from memory.



Lee Burgess: Yeah. I mean, I can still do my entire A capella CD from memory. I don't know why I still remember all of this stuff from college. It's crazy. College was a long time ago, and I still can memorize these, or have memorized this amazing volume of information. So, I think we oftentimes shortchange ourselves, when we're thinking about retaining information, that we can't do it, because we won't retain a lot of information in our daily lives, but I think, if you really go into your brain, you actually do have a lot of information retained. So, it's about how can you learn this information in the same way that you're able to retain other information.

Alison Monahan: I think that's right. For a simple example, say that you purchase a commercial bar course, and you're thinking, do I want to listen to lectures while I'm at the gym, or do I want to watch them? Well, if you're a visual learner, you probably want to watch them, and not just listen, because you're going to probably retain 50 percent more information just seeing it. So, things like that, just thinking about, okay, I need to sit down and watch this. They're different tools. We mentioned SketchyLaw, which I think is pretty amazing. I watched one of them just to review, and I still think I remember parts of it, years later. And [AdaptiBar](#) has a lot of stuff that explains complex law in a very visual way. So, look at these different tools, and really think about what's going to work for you.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. And the one thing about SketchyLaw is that they focus, at least right now, at the time of this recording, on the seven MBE subjects, but that still can be a good chunk of material that you can review in this way, and adapt as your own. And I think everybody on our team who has reviewed these videos had the same response, like, really, do they work? And then a little bit later, because I think they also do it to music, you're bopping along to the tune, or whatever, and you realize you remember things while you're doing laundry, or something completely unrelated, and you're like, wow, maybe this stuff does actually work.

So, you can play with this idea, and again, it's knowing you don't have to learn everything the exact same way for every subject, that you can pull these things in for different subjects that have meaning for you.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, absolutely. I think, if you are a very visual learner, I will give you the caveat on watching a bunch of lectures. If you are not benefiting from just watching a lecture of somebody explaining law to you, just stop.

Lee Burgess: Yeah.

Alison Monahan: You're probably going to be spending your time better if you get the book on the topic, and read the book, and make your own handwritten outline, just because chances are good, that's a more efficient way for your brain to actually learn this material.



- Lee Burgess: Yeah, I think that's very true. There's this idea that because most of the bar review providers provide 20 hours or more a week of lecture, that that is the proven way for everybody to retain this law, and that is not the case for a lot of people.
- Alison Monahan: No. I mean, I looked at the schedule for one of these. I was like, you've got to be joking. I'm not going to do this. And so, I didn't watch a single bar lecture, and I passed two bar exams. So, know what works.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah, and I did sit through all of those lectures, and I'm definitely a rule-follower, but I will say that I would go to the library ... We'd listen to these lectures in the morning, we'd go to the library after lunch, and it dawned on me that I had not retained anything from those lectures. And so, I really had to ... I would create my own outlines in the afternoon. It never dawned on me at that point that I was better off not going to the lecture.
- Alison Monahan: That you could have just skipped it.
- Lee Burgess: Because you and I weren't friends yet. You would have been like, why are you going to the lecture?
- Alison Monahan: I feel like, if you're not retaining anything, use those three hours to sleep in and go have a sandwich. What's the point?
- Lee Burgess: Exactly. I know. I needed more Alison Monahan in my life back then. But I think I even knew that it wasn't working for me. I think I was just fortunate that I was able to still study that material on my own, and make it work. Because I don't think, if I was to evaluate that bar prep experience now, I would choose to spend so much of my study time. Because 20-some hours a week ...
- Alison Monahan: That's a long time.
- Lee Burgess: Is a lot of time to review substantive material if you are doing it in a way that's going to help you retain it.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. So, I mean, along with making your materials, I think reviewing these things, figuring out, what do you know, what do you not know, testing yourself. All these things are what you need to do to have [a much more active approach](#) to bar study, which is much more likely to let you pass than just being like, well, I clocked my 20 hours, so I'm good.
- Lee Burgess: And it's pretty common knowledge in the study of how people learn that you have to see things in repetition before you can retain it. Some people say seven times, but you need to see it over and over again. So, you can't just say, check, I



know con law, and then come back six weeks later and go, why don't I know con law anymore? That's not how it works.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, but also con law is something you've studied before. Some of these topic areas you will never have seen before. In California, a lot of people, for example, have not taken community property. So, that's probably something that, regardless of what your bar schedule says, you want to start studying earlier, so that you can keep dipping into it. Maybe you watched the lecture on that, because it's a topic you don't know anything about, and then you make your outline, and then you review your outline, and you do some practice problems. You realize what you don't know, and you do some more. And maybe make a flowchart, or whatever it is. That's a topic that can be super visual. I can already visualize piles of money, or a house split down the middle, or whatever it is.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, exactly, and there's a nice flow about, you need to look at the source of the funds, and you need to see if they did anything to change the nature of the funds. It's like, then, do you have any presumptions? It's a great flow.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, you're imagining money setting on fire and turning into ashes. All these things are going to help you remember this topic that maybe you don't really, actually have that much familiarity with, even by the time you take the bar.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, that's true. I also think ... Well, we talk a lot about practice on this podcast, and every podcast we do, about the importance of practice when you're studying for any of these significant tests, and I think that one of the things that visual learners can also get a lot of benefit ... Well, everybody can get benefit, but visual learners specifically can get a benefit about writing answers, is the rewrite process.

If you are missing something, or you didn't learn the law in the correct way, and you missed the law, after you've evaluated your work, you can go back and do rewriting to make corrections and fix the law, and then it's possible, through that practice, you are reinforcing the correct law, and then you are putting it into your memory.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, absolutely. And I think one of the pros of being a visual learner in an area like law that doesn't really reward it so much is that you're going to be really great at structuring your outline, or structuring your essays, and things like that. Headers, not a problem. Of course you want headers. They just look good.

Lee Burgess: Right.

Alison Monahan: You know what I mean? And also, in terms of planning your outline, things like that, I think, again, this is where you have a real strength, because you can do a quick handwritten drawing that's going to contain, pack in a lot of information,



just because that's the way your brain works. For me, I would always have, assuming they would let me take it to the bar, but usually I would have a red pen and a blue pen, and for example, the law might always be blue, and then the facts I was going to use were always red, and then I had a black pen where I basically did the structure of the outline. Simple, but it was really easy to see at a glance what facts I needed to use, and what laws I might need to use, and how it all fit together.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, exactly. The other thing to think about when you're doing these practice tests, especially for essays, is utilize your scratch paper. You have the ability to create these visual representations for yourself about what you're going to write about. So, any time you're getting stuck, any time that you are struggling, go to your visual place. Scratch paper specifically doesn't have lines, so Alison will be very happy about scratch paper without lines.

Alison Monahan: Well, and you can also ... I had certain strategies for marking up the hypo, for example. When I read through it the first time, I would typically underline things that jumped out at me just very lightly, and then when I went back the second time for a really careful read, once I understood the question, I would be highlighting the key facts with a highlighter. And so, I had this consistent formula, and then oftentimes when I used a fact, I would cross it off. So, I had this visual way of looking at the question itself that it jumped out. If I had somehow forgotten to use a certain fact, it was obvious. It wasn't crossed off, it was highlighted.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, exactly.

Alison Monahan: But you want to practice that in advance. Don't just try it on exam day.

Lee Burgess: No, these are habits. In order to create a habit, you have to do something a lot, a lot, a lot of times, like over 25 times, or something like that.

Alison Monahan: So, every practice essay you've done.

Lee Burgess: Every practice essay. You can't be coming up with new strategies the day of the bar exam.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, pick your colors well in advance.

Lee Burgess: Exactly, exactly. So, other things to avoid if you are a visual learner is, often studying with others may not work for you, because you really have to do the hands-on work yourself. Visual distractions. Well, this is bad for everybody, but TV screens.

Alison Monahan: Oh my god, there's nothing I hate more than having a TV on in the background.



- Lee Burgess: Yeah. Your phone. Put your phone in your bag. There was a time when we didn't have cell phones, and it was okay.
- Alison Monahan: We lived.
- Lee Burgess: We did. We did.
- Alison Monahan: We communicated.
- Lee Burgess: We did. We survived. So, really try and just put things away, so you can focus. You were telling the story about sitting at the tea house, turn away from the street, so you're not distracted by the cars going by. Be very conscious of what's triggering for you, and try and regroup and make those small changes to make the most out of your study time.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, and I think, too, one of the key things was always, I had to have ear plugs if I was at a bar exam, because the visual clutter really bothered me. I'm sorry, the auditory clutter really bothered me. I needed to be able to focus on what was actually in front of me.
- Lee Burgess: And you know, some bar exams open up ... I know they do this in California. I'm not sure about some other states. But they will have a day where they open up registration, and based on the order in which you register, is the order in which you get assigned a seat. So, they actually told us about this in law school. And so, they open registration at midnight some night, I don't remember, but a bunch of us went on, because you're in law school, you're up at midnight, on at midnight and registered, and then we were in the first couple of rows of a room that, in a convention center, had thousands and thousands and thousands and thousands of people. I think, for a lot of us, it was much less distracting to only see, like, four rows in front of you, four laptops in front of you, than the thousands of people in front of you.
- So, you can even think about how you can possibly manipulate the test-taking situation to allow you to have less visual distractions. Because it was less distracting, only having a few rows of people in front of me.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. Weirdly enough, I always preferred being in the back of the room for a test.
- Lee Burgess: Really? That's interesting.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. Weird.



- Lee Burgess: In law school, I was always in the middle, but on an end, because I didn't like being ...
- Alison Monahan: I had to be on an aisle, yeah.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah, I didn't like that climb ...
- Alison Monahan: It's like the airplane. I was like, I want to be able to get out. I am trapped.
- Lee Burgess: I know, I know, I do the same thing on airplanes. And what was funny was, I actually got on an aisle for the bar exam. That was interesting.
- Alison Monahan: I know.
- Lee Burgess: Well, with that, we are unfortunately out of time, but I want to take a second to remind you to check out our blog at BarExamToolbox.com, which is full of helpful tips to help you prepare and stay sane as you study for the bar exam. You can also find information on our website about our courses, tools, and one-on-one tutoring programs to support you as you study for the UBE or California bar exam.

Another thing I want to mention is, if you are someone who has trouble coming up with some of these options to help yourself study, I think this is a good opportunity where a [tutor](#) can be very effective, because your tutor can help you suss out what's actually working for you, and not working for you, and brainstorming different strategies, and if you need that to be successful, that might be something you want to explore. So, just something to think about.

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If you have any questions or comments, please don't hesitate to reach out to myself or Alison at Lee@BarExamToolbox.com, or Alison@BarExamToolbox.com, or you can always contact us via our website [contact form](#) at BarExamToolbox.com.

Thanks for listening, and we'll talk soon.

RESOURCES:

- [Learning Style Quiz](#)



- [Studying for the Bar as a Visual Learner](#)
- [Review of Lean Sheets Bar Exam Outlines](#)
- [Circa Notebooks](#)
- [Mind Maps and Other Fun Visual Learning Methods](#)
- [Can Spaced Repetition Help You Learn the Law?](#)
- [Can Visual Learning Help You Prepare for the Bar Exam?](#)
- [Tools for Bar Exam Success: Sketchy Law](#)
- [Tools for Bar Exam Success: AdaptiBar](#)
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