



Lee Burgess: Welcome back to the Bar Exam Toolbox podcast. Today, we are chatting about making the most of your commercial course as you get ready to prepare for the bar exam. Your Bar Exam hosts are Alison Monahan and Lee Burgess, that's me. We are 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 the career related website [CareerDicta](#). Alison also runs [The Girl's 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.

Alison Monahan: Welcome back. Today, we're talking about making the most out of your commercial bar review course. Well, first off, Lee, what can students really expect from one of the major commercial courses? What do you get?

Lee Burgess: Well, and we should probably highlight what we mean. So we're talking about [BARBRI](#), [Kaplan](#), [Themis](#), the big programs that are kind of offering you one complete package. They're probably tabling at your schools. It's what everybody's taken in the past. This is kind of the historic way to study for the bar.

Alison Monahan: Right, the classic.

Lee Burgess: The classic way. Not cheap. Multiple thousands of dollars.

Alison Monahan: Right, but lots of information.

Lee Burgess: Lots of information. So, pretty much the common thing between all of these programs is they have an abundance of audio lectures – often times, 12 to 15 hours a week, if not more.

Alison Monahan: That's a lot of lectures.

Lee Burgess: I know, sometimes up to 20 hours a week. And the thing that a lot of people don't appreciate is these are not dynamic lectures, even if you go to an in-person lecture. It is basically like listening to a recording. They're just presenting information, there is no dialogue. So, it is really passive listening of audio lectures, and this is a huge portion of the bar prep program. They will also often



times supplement those with some sort of exercises or a way to kind of test yourself.

Alison Monahan: Are these like fill-in-the-blank handouts?

Lee Burgess: They can be fill-in-the-blank handouts, they can be online. BARBRI has an AMP program that they use. Your bar review provider might have ways to kind of test your knowledge, so there might be some exercises as well. They're also going to assign you some practice questions. They're probably going to give you books or online access to past exam questions and outlines, or sample answers for those questions. You may even turn in some questions for feedback – we'll talk to you about that a little bit later. And then there's going to be MBE practice. They're going to have some sort of typically online tool, although they might also provide you with books with tons of MBE questions. You should ask your bar provider if they are real released questions or if they are made up questions by the bar companies. You will hear all sorts of different perspectives on that. We have shared some perspectives on our blog as well, but you should understand where those questions come from. The multiple choice is typically 50% of your grade, so that is not a part that you want to ignore. I think that that's pretty much what...

Alison Monahan: Well, don't a lot of them also have books, like outlines?

Lee Burgess: Some of them also give you physical books.

Alison Monahan: And digital lectures.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. With some of them, it's like a huge box. It's very intimidating.

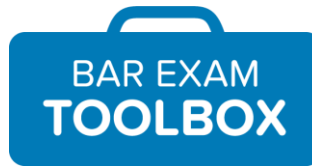
Alison Monahan: Yeah.

Lee Burgess: It's an abundance of information.

Alison Monahan: Like telephone book stacks of stuff.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, more information than you could ever really manage.

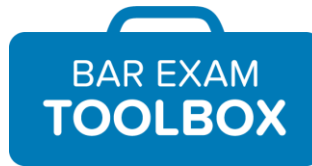
Alison Monahan: And the other thing to consider too is, typically these are done in an eight to 10-week sprint.



- Lee Burgess: Yes, exactly. So usually, if you graduate in May, you often times start right after graduation to get ready for the exam in July. And then depending on where the holidays come, sometimes you'll start before the winter holidays, but sometimes, you will even study at the beginning of January.
- Alison Monahan: Right, it depends.
- Lee Burgess: It depends on the year. So, yeah, it's a lot. It's set up to be a full-time study job.
- Alison Monahan: They'll also kind of give you an outline, like, "This is what you should be doing."
- Lee Burgess: Yeah, they give you a study schedule of what you're supposed to be doing.
- Alison Monahan: Which can be kind of crazy.
- Lee Burgess: It can be an unrealistic study schedule for basically everyone. I think that the reality is when you're looking at these programs, you have to remember that they have picked whatever they've decided their student is, and they have written this program to that student. You may not be that student, and you need to be thoughtful about that. That student is not a foreign-trained attorney. That student does not have learning differences. That student did not struggle academically. So, you want to think about that. But this is pretty much what you get in these kinds of out-of-the box programs. You open up the box, this is the program that you get.
- Alison Monahan: Or you open up your iPad.
- Lee Burgess: Or you open up your iPad, or you open up your computer. But I think one of the things that you have to do is think about whether or not these programs are going to be a good fit for you, because these programs table at your law schools and this is what everybody's done years and years and years. Everybody thinks when you're a 1L, like, "Sign up now, freeze in that rate", and all that stuff. But you don't have to do that because, one, there are more options than there used to be, but you also need to have more information to decide if these programs are a good fit for you. And you will not know that when you're a 1L.
- Alison Monahan: Right. And it's possible that there are bits and pieces of them that can be very useful for different individuals, but those pieces are unlikely to be the same pieces for everyone. This is definitely a case where they make the most out of these if you've signed up for them or if you're thinking about signing up. You really think about your learning style.



- Lee Burgess: Yeah.
- Alison Monahan: Are you a person who absorbs information effectively through audio or video lectures?
- Lee Burgess: Yeah.
- Alison Monahan: I knew, for example, that that is not me. I cannot sit in a room and listen to someone drone on about something for four to eight hours a day, or whatever it was. I was like, "I will literally lose my mind." And also, it just didn't seem that efficient to me. I'm a person who can sit down. I have a lot of focus for reading, so I can sit down and read an outline, and deconstruct that material, and teach myself that material. I just knew I would go completely insane if I had to sit through these lectures.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah, and I think that another thing that people don't think about too is maybe your learning style for learning something brand new is different than your learning style for reviewing something.
- Alison Monahan: Right. Well, that was the other thing. I just thought, "Why would I sit through lectures on all the first year topics that I already learned?"
- Lee Burgess: Right. If you never took California Community Property, maybe it makes sense to listen to a Community Property lecture first. But if you got an A in Real Property, maybe it doesn't make sense to spend...
- Alison Monahan: Right. I was a Civ Pro CA; probably I don't need to be sitting through Civ Pro 101.
- Lee Burgess: Right. Or if you took a class on the performance exam, why are you spending time sitting in lectures about the performance exam? If your school had a class on the performance exam and you feel ready for that, maybe that's not the best use of your time. So, you also not only want to think about your learning style, but you also want to evaluate. Is it the same for everything?
- Alison Monahan: Right. No, I think that's a very key point. You've got to kind of figure out what are your stronger and weaker areas, what do you know or not know? And then use the time available to you in the most efficient way possible, because you just don't have enough time to learn telephone book stacks of material, and it's also not necessary.



- Lee Burgess: Yeah. You also need to look at the study schedule and ask yourself, "Can I do this? Is this realistic?" And you have to look at your life. I think most people need to be studying for the bar about 40 to 50 hours a week for the 8 to 10 weeks, but maybe you only have 30 hours a week, because you have kids, or you're working part-time, or you're working full-time and you only have 25 hours a week. If you only have 25 hours a week to study, do not spend 20 of them listening to audio lectures.
- Alison Monahan: No, that is a terrible idea.
- Lee Burgess: That's a terrible idea. What if you're someone who needs a lot of extra time to memorize material? Then the time that they're probably going to put on that study schedule is not going to work for you either.
- Alison Monahan: Right, and I think I hear that a lot from people who didn't pass is that, "By the time they asked me to start memorizing, it was two weeks before the exam or something, and there was just literally no way I could possibly memorize all this. I now realize I should've started sooner."
- Lee Burgess: Right.
- Alison Monahan: You want to look at that schedule in advance, and if there are any red flag things that jump out at you that's like, "Oh, I really don't think that's a way this is going to be for me", then you're allowed to change it. Nobody is forcing you. You don't pass the bar. You don't get any extra points because you did everything on the study schedule.
- Lee Burgess: Mm-hmm (affirmative).
- Alison Monahan: This is the time for you to be a grownup and say, "You know what? I know from my own previous experience that I'm not great at memorizing things. I probably need to start sooner so I can do spaced repetition and really get this stuff in my brain."
- Lee Burgess: Yeah. I also think you want to be evaluating how it's going.
- Alison Monahan: Oh, of course. Definitely. That's the other problem. Often times, it's a lot of, do a lecture, watch a lecture for weeks and weeks and weeks, and there's not a lot of, are you actually absorbing this and able to use it type of feedback and practice going on.



- Lee Burgess: Right, and that's a problem, because you don't want to figure it out – let's say you're studying for the July exam – Fourth of July weekend, that things have not been going well.
- Alison Monahan: Right, that you really just kind of wasted the last month.
- Lee Burgess: Right.
- Alison Monahan: That's not a great position to be in.
- Lee Burgess: No. So, I think setting aside time each week to kind of audit yourself makes a lot of sense.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, absolutely. I think you can do that even objectively with how many MBE questions you are getting wrong or right. Are your scores going up? Are your scores in certain areas going up? We'll talk later about some tools to supplement some of these courses. They can give you this information pretty easily, but if not, you want to be tracking that.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah.
- Alison Monahan: Are there areas you're stronger and weaker? The reality is, if you're missing a lot of MBE questions in a certain area, it typically suggests you don't actually know the law.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah, I think that's true.
- Alison Monahan: That's why you missed them.
- Lee Burgess: That's why you missed them. Yeah.
- Alison Monahan: Often times, people are like, "Oh, but I hate this. I just hate real property." It's like, "Well, I'm sorry. That's one-seventh of the MBE. You probably need to get over that and just actually sit down and learn it."
- Lee Burgess: Yeah.
- Alison Monahan: I'm sorry you don't like future interests. No one likes future interests. We all had to learn it.
- Lee Burgess: It's true. Yeah. You can't just opt out.



Alison Monahan: Yeah. You don't get to just be like, "You know, I just find con law really confusing." Actually, the con law for the MBE truthfully is not that hard.

Lee Burgess: Yeah.

Alison Monahan: It's like you need to know the levels of scrutiny, and if you know that, you've got a large part of the con law down. I think everyone can learn that.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. I just hear over and over and over again. We talk to, oh my gosh, hundreds of bar takers every season.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, easily.

Lee Burgess: It's probably not a good idea for me to count them, because it will be really overwhelming.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, it's a lot.

Lee Burgess: I think if I had to pick the one common thing that I've heard from people who have failed, it was, "I spent too much time doing the lectures." Almost everyone says that.

Alison Monahan: And/or, "I got really overwhelmed with the schedule. I fell behind, and I just kind of gave up."

Lee Burgess: Yeah. And then I also think what happens is, everybody reflects and says they spent too much time learning the lectures, but when we work with first-time takers, we literally cannot convince them to abandon the lectures.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. They're like, "But I won't know something." It's like, "You need to write a practice question." They're like, "I haven't finished the lectures." It's like, "Stop talking to me about the lectures." You have three hours to sit down and learn this material, and then you can do a practice question on it, and we can see how it goes.

Lee Burgess: Yep.

Alison Monahan: I think, like you said earlier, if there are certain topics you just have absolutely no idea on and you find learning from lectures an effective learning style, then sure, go spend a few hours watching this topic on something you don't know anything about.



Lee Burgess: Right.

Alison Monahan: But it's just not the case that most people... except for some foreign-trained attorneys. It's not just the case that you know nothing about these topics.

Lee Burgess: Right.

Alison Monahan: I mean, that's just not true, so why do you need to sit through a lecture that's like, "And then in this contract, there's this thing called an offer." You know about offer and acceptance. Use your time elsewhere.

Lee Burgess: And most of those lectures actually aren't really teaching anything. They're just reviewing. They're just kind of reading the outline and reviewing it for you.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. I feel like you can read the outline way more efficiently.

Lee Burgess: Yeah.

Alison Monahan: I mean, this is why we have transcripts on our podcasts. If you don't want to listen to it, you can read it in about... Oh, I don't know. I can probably read a transcript of a 30-minute episode in maybe 5 minutes, basically. Maybe 10, if I'm really diving into it.

Lee Burgess: Yeah.

Alison Monahan: It's a lot faster to read.

Lee Burgess: It is. I think the other thing you have to think about is, one, do you even like these lectures? But yeah, you're right, it's more efficient to read. Is this a good use of time? Are you retaining this information? Are you learning anything from these lectures? Just remember, again, nobody knows how you study for the bar.

Alison Monahan: You don't get any credit for just sitting there and listening to them.

Lee Burgess: No.

Alison Monahan: And the reality is... I think part of this comes down to what you were talking about earlier with, is this schedule realistic? I think the only way the schedule, quote, unquote "can be realistic" is that it's doing a lot of these lower value, kind of easier, more passive activities because the reality is, you can't really focus for 10 hours a day.





Lee Burgess: No.

Alison Monahan: So, if you ask somebody to do really focused work for 10 hours a day, you cannot sustain that. The only way you can sustain this amount of hours is if that can't actually really be that engaging of your brain, because your brain can't function for that much.

Lee Burgess: This is my other favorite thing that people are really into doing now, because so many people are watching these lectures online.

Alison Monahan: Double time.

Lee Burgess: Double time. That's not even in the script, guys. We just are like... We actually... We haven't recorded a podcast in a while and we are just on today.

Alison Monahan: Well, you just hear the same thing over and over.

Lee Burgess: I know.

Alison Monahan: When we talk to people, like, "Okay, what happened? How did you prepare? How did you fail?" As soon as they say, "Oh, I did this program", I'm like, "Okay, and then you found it was overwhelming, and the lectures weren't really helpful, and you fell behind, and you didn't do any practice." "How'd you know that?" "You failed the bar. I mean, I know what happened to you."

Lee Burgess: Yeah, but the double time is something where it's like... First of all, I appreciate the desire for double time. I often times listen to audio books at like 1.25 or something like that. Because we talk pretty fast. I'm used to people talking fast, and it drives me crazy how slow people read audio books. But there is no way to really retain information at double time.

Alison Monahan: No. I feel like at that point you want to check the box, like, "I got through this lecture." It's like, "Okay. Congratulations."

Lee Burgess: That was, what? 90 minutes? Two hours?

Alison Monahan: Yeah, you just spent two hours. You got through it. You get to check it off and move on with your life. Did you retain anything from it?

Lee Burgess: Right. Could you talk to me about what was in that lecture?



- Alison Monahan: Also, couldn't you have just read a short outline in less time than that and probably gotten more out of it?
- Lee Burgess: Yeah, I think that's the thing. If you are a diehard and you're like, "No, I have to do these lectures", then finish the lecture, and then go to your cat, or your stuffed animal, or your significant other, or a friend and say, "I just listened to this three-hour lecture. I'm going to tell you what I learned."
- Alison Monahan: Right. "Maybe I'll take some notes on a flash card or on a piece of paper."
- Lee Burgess: Right, and if you can't repeat anything, stop. Just stop.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. I think the key point with any of these commercial courses – you have more than enough material than you need to pass the bar. They provided it to you in a variety of different formats, and you are allowed to use whatever format you want, and it does not matter. You're allowed to go off-script. The people who made the schedule do not know that you CALI'd wills and trusts, and therefore, probably don't need the two days that you've been assigned to study it, but that you've never seen some other topic.
- Lee Burgess: Right.
- Alison Monahan: So, you need to take those two days that you'll be doing wills and trust, which you already know, and take it and apply it to something else that you don't know.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah.
- Alison Monahan: That's allowed.
- Lee Burgess: That's allowed.
- Alison Monahan: We're giving you permission. Right now, you can do that.
- Lee Burgess: Right, yeah, because you have to own this experience, and they're not customizing these programs to you. You hire us, we will build you a customized study schedule.
- Alison Monahan: Right. We will ask you these questions.



- Lee Burgess: We will ask you these questions, but that is not what's happening in these out-of-the-box programs, and that's okay. It doesn't mean that they're bad or they shouldn't be used. It's just a different product, and you have to be honest about what it is.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, and you have to use it effectively. You've got the material. Now, you take the material and put it together for yourself.
- Lee Burgess: Yep.
- Alison Monahan: I think they tend to underemphasize the MBE as well, but that's a separate issue.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah. I think that they do too.
- Alison Monahan: Because it's 50%.
- Lee Burgess: It's 50%, and I think it's because it's really hard to teach people to do the MBE.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, and people don't want to do the practice, and again, there are ways to do MBE practice that are more or less useful.
- Lee Burgess: Right.
- Alison Monahan: If you just sit and do 30 questions, and then you kind of flip through and see, "Oh, okay, I got seven of them wrong. Alright, I'll kind of glance at those questions" – you're probably not getting as much out of that as you could be.
- Lee Burgess: Mm-hmm (affirmative).
- Alison Monahan: I think the way to think about this is, for any hour that you're practicing or any hour that you're preparing, is this really a great use of my time?
- Lee Burgess: Yeah.
- Alison Monahan: And sometimes, like we said, you've got to mix it up. Some of it needs to be easier and less compelling for your brain; and some of it needs to be really focused. And the more that you can do the focused practice, which is the other piece that tends to fall by the wayside here, typically the better you're going to be. I would rather have somebody spend three hours writing practice essays



and really evaluating them, and then take a break for the rest of the afternoon, than sit and mindlessly watch six hours of lectures.

Lee Burgess: So would I.

Alison Monahan: I think that's going to move the needle forward, and you could still go to your yoga class.

Lee Burgess: Mm-hmm (affirmative). So, we've talked about a lot of common problems, so let's just kind of sum these up for folks. So, the study schedule being overwhelming and the inflexibility of it, and the fact that it's not customized to you. So you always have to really make the study schedule work for you and abandon it if necessary, or tailor it to your own needs. You have to appreciate that they are not necessarily customizing this program to your learning style and you need to constantly evaluate the activities you're doing and whether or not they are high-value. If they are not high-value, I would... As we were just saying, like go to yoga and study less, but do high-value items. That's more important. If you are someone who gets accommodations, especially some sort of extended time, that is not built in to a lot of these programs. So, if you, let's say, get a time and a half on the exam, you are typically going to take longer to do all of these exercises, and that does not mean that you should then study for 16 hours a day.

Alison Monahan: No, that is not feasible.

Lee Burgess: That's the opposite of what you should do. But again, you're going to have to tailor this program to work for you or get some additional outside help. Again, make sure that if you are someone with learning differences, that the program that's being offered is going to be able to be manipulated to get you what you need, because I think the workload and the way that they're pushing you through things is not really too reflective of somebody who might have time and a half.

Alison Monahan: Right. I think in that scenario, you've really got to be thinking about, do you use your final semester of law school to start doing some of this preparation work so you have extra time? Do you consider maybe taking not the first bar when you graduate, but the next one? These are conversations you need to be having with yourself and with your trusted advisors about what's going to work for you, because this out-of-the-box solution is almost certainly not going to be the solution that is going to get you to pass the bar.



- Lee Burgess: Right, and actually, I think it was during our last [accommodations podcast episode](#) with Elizabeth Knox who's on our team, she was mentioning that when she was studying for the bar that she needs transcripts because she has a difficult time hearing. And her bar review provider didn't have the accommodations that she needed.
- Alison Monahan: Right, I remember that.
- Lee Burgess: So she was like, "Well, you have to give them to me."
- Alison Monahan: Like, "Are you familiar with the ADA?"
- Lee Burgess: Right, exactly, but it took time. And that's unnecessary stress. So, she paved the way for people behind her, because they had to get it done, but she still had to go through that. So, if you have very specific needs, you should talk to the sales reps at these bar companies and make sure they're going to be able to meet your needs quickly, because you don't need a battle in the middle of prepping for the bar.
- Alison Monahan: No. And like she was saying, in some cases, with different products, the answer was like, "Yep, no problem. We can send that on over to you right now." And then in other cases, it wasn't the case.
- Lee Burgess: Right. That's a problem.
- Alison Monahan: So, you want to probably be working with the people who are like, "Yep, not a problem. We can do that for you."
- Lee Burgess: Yeah. One thing we mentioned earlier in the podcast was that most of these programs do have you submit some sort of materials for feedback, usually essays and performance tests. What have we gotten some feedback on from people that we talked to about that feedback?
- Alison Monahan: Well, let's be honest. Typically, it's not something that someone spent a lot of time grading.
- Lee Burgess: Right.
- Alison Monahan: I kind of analogize it to basically someone doing what the bar graders are doing, which is valuable to a certain extent. I think doing that practice and submitting is



a good exercise. I don't think necessarily relying too heavily on that feedback, which is not going to be very extensive, is really that great of an idea.

Lee Burgess: And then you'll hear all sorts of crazy stuff. One of my favorites, and somebody does this every single season, at every single school – somebody submits one of the model answers or one of the student answers that the bar releases in California, and then they fail, and they're like, "Wow, look", just to prove these graders wrong. And it's like, "Wow, that was a waste of your time. You learned nothing from that exercise." I think you have to take the feedback as it comes. Don't get super hung up on scores.

Alison Monahan: Right, the scores are very unrealistic.

Lee Burgess: The scores can be very unrealistic, and you have to appreciate that the scores in the moment on the test can vary. There's a whole separate discussion about whether or not the bar is a good idea and the way that it's scored, being graded by humans is a good idea. But we see score reports where you have two different graders read the same question and scores can vary.

Alison Monahan: A lot.

Lee Burgess: A lot.

Alison Monahan: I remember emailing you, "Is it normal for these two graders to be off by like 10 points? Doesn't this seem to question the validity of this test?"

Lee Burgess: And I was like, "Yes, however..."

Alison Monahan: Sometimes it's as high as 15.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, exactly. So, the reality is if you get a score from the grader from your bar program and you're like, "This is crap. Rah, I don't want..." – don't spend a lot of energy stressing about that. Take the feedback, question it, evaluate it, and then move on with your life.

Alison Monahan: Although, I've actually often heard the opposite from people who end up failing, and often failing by quite a lot, is that, "I don't understand what happened. All of the feedback I was getting from my bar company told me that I was writing passing or better than passing essays. And then I'd get my answers in California, and I got 50s across the board."



- Lee Burgess: Yeah, I've heard it both ways. I think that it kind of depends, because I think there are other people who believe that it's the bar company's policy to fail many people to encourage them to keep studying. But yeah, I've heard that too. I do think sometimes though what can play into that is they had some sort of a bit of a meltdown in the exam room. So, if you're passing all of your questions, and then you are failing the exam, sometimes it might be like, "What happened? Did you have a panic attack? Or did you forget everything?" All that kind of stuff.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, or did you actually do these questions under realistic time conditions?
- Lee Burgess: Oh, that's a good one, and not copying them out of the book.
- Alison Monahan: Or I feel like sometimes, did you really set a timer for that one hour limit? Do you have fatigue issues where you can do one question appropriately, but you can't do three, or you can't do... What is it? Two plus the PT?
- Lee Burgess: Mm-hmm (affirmative).
- Alison Monahan: All these things factor into it. So, certainly, by the end of these courses, you want to be making sure that what you're doing for practice is as close as possible to what you're doing on the exam, because it's like, great, if you can do a one-hour essay and then go have a coffee break and walk around the block, and then come back and do some MBE questions – sadly, that's not the way the bar works.
- Lee Burgess: That's so true, yeah. So, you've got to be thoughtful about the feedback that you are getting. And if you need more in-depth feedback, you need to supplement your course, and that's okay, and we're going to talk about that next. But when is this course not enough? Because I think this is a very important moment. So, when you supplement, I think there are a few things you want to think about. One, are there holes in the program that you have that need to be filled by something else?
- Alison Monahan: Right.
- Lee Burgess: This is different than just having too much information and repetitive resources. I do not think that that's a good use of your time.
- Alison Monahan: No, but I think, for example, one thing that can be missing for a lot of people is a very condensed version of these outlines.



- Lee Burgess: Yep.
- Alison Monahan: Something like [SmartBarPrep](#), for example. That is in the realm of something you might be able to memorize.
- Lee Burgess: Right. [Lean Sheets](#).
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, Lean Sheets. Even [BarEssays.com](#) in California have short outlines and things. If you don't feel like you either have or have time to make something that you can memorize, you've got to get on that.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah, because sometimes the bar outlines that you're getting with your commercial course are like 500 pages.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, you can't memorize that.
- Lee Burgess: You can't memorize that.
- Alison Monahan: This needs to be in the realm of, say, under 100 pages for the entire bar exam, type of scale is what we're talking about.
- Lee Burgess: Exactly. I think if you are struggling with the MBE, especially if your bar program does not provide real released questions, then you want to try out a program like [AdaptiBar](#), which we think does a really good job of making sure that you are prepping for the MBE in the right way, and seeing the right questions, and things like that.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. I would go so far as to say – and they're not paying me to say this – that I really feel like almost everyone preparing for the bar really ought to have AdaptiBar.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah.
- Alison Monahan: I mean, that was basically how I passed the bar. I had an early version of something similar to what became AdaptiBar, but it was incredibly effective at pointing out the areas of the MBE that I was doing terribly on.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah.





- Alison Monahan: And that enabled me in a short period of time to address those failings and turn that around, and drastically increase my rate of accuracy on the MBE, which is definitely why I passed the exam.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah.
- Alison Monahan: So, if you don't know which questions you're typically missing, you can't correct that. This is all about correcting your weak areas as quickly as possible, and then getting a realistic idea of how you're doing. I just feel like for the price point particularly, given all the other money you're already spending on this, I feel like AdaptiBar is almost a must-have.
- Lee Burgess: Mm-hmm (affirmative).
- Alison Monahan: And it's in all of our programs. That's how strongly we feel about it.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah, exactly.
- Alison Monahan: We basically make people use it.
- Lee Burgess: We do. Using a tutor or using some supplemental programs that might be available through your law school. First of all, if your law school is giving you feedback on writing assignments, or doing workshops for you, or things like that, not all law schools are doing this. If your law school is doing that, you should evaluate whether or not those are helpful for you, and you should engage as much because you've paid a lot of money. They want you to pass, go for it.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, and I think in school, I know you taught in these programs that people just don't necessarily take them seriously. And then in the summer, more and more schools are doing that type of extra work and extra feedback for their students too. Take advantage of that.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah. It's free. It's great.
- Alison Monahan: And it's more customized than you're going to get just like, "Oh, I've got to watch this lecture. I don't have time to..." I love that one: "I didn't have time to submit the weekly assignment that my school was willing to grade for me, because I was too busy watching these lectures." It's like, "Do you think that was a good choice?"



- Lee Burgess: Yeah. So, I guess we can toot our own horn about our own programs. We do have on-demand programs that do help you do focused practice. That's our [Writing of the Week program](#). It helps you self-evaluate that practice. We also have our [Practice of the Week, our POW program](#), which walks you through real released MBE questions to help you kind of learn and study. It's a different idea than AdaptiBar, which is really focused on adaptive practice. What we're trying to do is more, how do you do these questions?
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, the strategy and technique.
- Lee Burgess: The strategies and techniques. So, you may want to look into those. We think that those are ways that you can kind of plug some holes in some of these commercial bar prep courses for your individual needs. And then if you are someone who especially has unique needs or you feel like this is becoming a dumpster fire, that is I think when tutoring to help you triage. Pulling in an expert who knows more about this exam is going to help you try and salvage a program that you may not feel good about. And so, that's when you want to reach out to something that's customized to you to try and fix this problem.
- Alison Monahan: Right, because we know what happens. We know how all this ends up.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah, we know how this ends, and it's not going to be good.
- Alison Monahan: It's like, "Do you want to talk to us before or after you fail the bar?"
- Lee Burgess: Yeah. Or if you have a complicated situation. I mean, we have students who are pregnant and are struggling because they've got different physical needs, or health concerns, or as we've talked about, learning differences. All of this stuff where you need to have some unique circumstances worked in, or you've had a death in the family... There are so many things, and you're trying to regroup.
- Alison Monahan: If you're working and you've got stuff going on.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. We've kind of, I feel like at this point, heard most of this before.
- Lee Burgess: We've seen a lot of it. Yeah. Every now and then we get something new, but like...
- Alison Monahan: Pretty rarely.



- Lee Burgess: Yeah, pretty rarely. But our team is good at helping you triage and make the most of the time you have left, and that's what's really important. So, I think that sometimes you need to supplement and get external help. And again, it's hard because it's more money, and this is such an expensive process, but failing the bar is so expensive.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, so I think approaching these courses, understanding what they are, and then figuring out how you can make them work for you, and then if you find that they're not totally working for you, where can you fill those gaps so that you go into the exam feeling confident and not feeling like this is probably unlikely to go well?
- Lee Burgess: Yeah, exactly. Alright, any final thoughts before we wrap this up?
- Alison Monahan: No. I mean, I feel like we've pretty much covered it all at this point.
- Lee Burgess: I know. I know.
- Alison Monahan: Just don't watch the lectures at the exclusion of everything else.
- Lee Burgess: I know. Just don't.
- Alison Monahan: That's my final thought.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah, and don't believe... I guess my final thought too is, how many people told me when I was studying, "Just do everything that BARBRI tells you, and then you'll pass."
- Alison Monahan: That's not true.
- Lee Burgess: That's not true. For most people, that is not true.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. It's like, it works for some people, it doesn't work for other people. You've got the resources that you need, and if you don't have those resources, get other ones, because this is a very individualized process. I think the only thing that matters is in the end, you get a passing score, and it does not matter what it required to get you there.
- Lee Burgess: Yep, exactly. Alright, I want to take a second to remind you, you can check out our [blog](https://www.BarExamToolbox.com/blog) at BarExamToolbox.com, which is full of helpful hints 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.

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[Writing of the Week \(WOW\) Bar Essay Workshop](#)

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[Podcast Episode 60: Applying for Accommodations on the Bar Exam \(w/Elizabeth Knox\)](#)

[Bar Exam Toolbox blog: Bar Study Tips: What Happens During a Typical Commercial Bar Review Course?](#)