In January 1942 leading Nazis met at Wannsee House, in Berlin, to work out the details.

- Reinhard Heydrich, the head of the Gestapo, was in charge of the plans
- All Jews were to be transported to areas of Eastern Europe under German control.
- Some of the fitter Jews were worked to death on building projects; any survivors were to be killed
- Others were sent to death camps, there they were to be gassed to death
- In March 1942 the first death camp started operating at Belzak, Poland.

The Death Camps
There were six death camps at first run by SS officers. They were built well away from cities and Germany. Local troops were used as guards instead of the German army.

Prisoners arrived by trains that went straight into the camps. The fitter prisoners were used to help run the camp, for example disposing of the bodies. But the majority were killed as soon as possible. Children, the aged, and the sick were killed first, their belongings taken. They were usually told they were going to have a shower and sometimes even given soap and towel. They were then heading, naked, into the gas chamber.

In 1943 a new gas chamber was built to hold 2000 people. Once in the gas chamber it could take to 20 minutes to die. Once all the prisoners had died the gas was pumped out and the bodies removed. Fit prisoners were ordered to remove jewellery, cut off women’s hair and use pliers to extract gold fillings from teeth.

In 1944, at Auschwitz, 400,000 Hungarian Jews were gassed in just 3 months. Initially bodies were just buried in deep pits then covered with lime, but as the camps developed crematoria were built to burn the bodies.

The prisoners used to help run the camps were deliberately mistreated. They were given little to eat and disease was rife. Nazi doctors used some prisoners for medical experiments, without anaesthetic.