

English Transcript for *Creating a Plan*

By now, you know there is a lot to do in this crazy U.S. admissions process. When you look at the guide books and the websites, you'll see that most experts suggest giving yourself about two years to complete the whole process. Here in the U.S., students will begin researching colleges in their second year of high school just to apply by their fourth year. Now, if you're taking this course years in advance of when you're going to apply, congratulations, you have plenty of time to do all of it. If, however, you're taking this course with only months before you have to apply, don't worry. You can do it. The key to any application process is creating a good plan. And the first step to creating a good plan is to get a calendar. Seriously. Like your school list, if you don't write things down, you're never going to be able to finish it all. Many of us, including me, need to see it to do it. So use this calendar to make sure that you do it all. The first information to add to your calendar would be deadlines. Deadlines are going to control your whole application process. A January 1st deadline gives you a lot more time to create your best application than a November 30th deadline. We just discussed all of the deadline options you are going to see. When do you want to apply? If you think you want to apply early, put it on your calendar. But I would suggest putting both the early date and the regular decision date on your calendar, just in case. If you have rolling admission schools on your list, put the final application date on your calendar, but also put an earlier date when you want to submit your application. Once your deadlines are on your calendar, you can begin adding more pieces by working backwards. There is no specific order to adding steps to your plan or dates to your calendar. But there is a lot to think about. Being at Penn's English language programs, I encourage students to start by thinking about their English language skills. Have you taken the TOEFL or IELTS? When do you plan to take the tests or to take them again? How good are your scores? If your scores are low, how much time do you need to improve your English? Can you improve your English on your own? Or do you need to consider enrolling in an English program? How good is your English going to be by the application deadline? When going to your calendar, you might be adding something as simple as test dates for the TOEFL or IELTS. Or you might be adding something much bigger, like coming to the U.S. for English studies. No matter what, you should be adding something to your calendar. After researching the requirements for your schools, you now know which tests you have to take. Testing is an easy piece to add to your plan. SAT and ACT test dates are all set. The SAT is usually offered in October, November, December, January, March, May, and June. The ACT is usually offered in September, October, December, February, April, and June. When will you be ready to take your first test? This is especially important if you're still improving your English language skills. How many times are you going to take each test? When do you want to take your last test? Do you really want to be taking a test in December when you also have applications to fill out and essays to write and other pieces to worry about? Based on your deadlines, what is the last test date your schools will accept? We're going to talk more about testing in Week 4, but start thinking about your testing plan now. Look at your deadlines and work backwards, adding dates onto your calendar from your last test to your first test. Now, we just spent a whole week discussing research. So when do you want to finish your research and have your final school list? Certainly, your, your list might change depending on things like your test scores, but choosing the school where you're going to apply is going to determine what else you need to do. Until you set your school list, you don't know how many essays you have to write, how many letters of recommendation you need to request, which tests you need to take, how many applications you need

to fill out. And much, much more. Your list can change. But if you're still choosing schools in October, you're never going to be able to meet January deadlines. Pick a time on your calendar that gives you enough time before to do good in-depth research, and enough time after to put together all of your applications. We have discussed it before, but every application is going to have several pieces. And each one of those pieces is going to take time to finish. Writing one essay can take weeks or even months. What if you have to write 12 essays? Recommendations take time to request, time to write, and time to submit. The process for submitting your academic documents might be different for each of your schools. How long will it take you to get those documents? How long will it take you to submit them according to the school's guidelines? Next week, we're going to go piece by piece through the application documents. So have your calendars ready. You have to be smart when creating your plan. You won't be able to do things one at a time. There's just too much to do and not enough time to do it all. You're going to have to juggle several pieces at once. But the trick is to figure out how many pieces and which pieces you can juggle at the same time. For instance, it makes sense to request a letter of recommendation at the same time that you're writing an essay. You can request the letter, work on the essay for a couple of weeks, and then check back in with the, the person who's writing your recommendation about the letter. Both can easily happen at the same time. On the other hand, it's probably not the best idea to schedule an SAT and a TOEFL on the same weekend. It's just too much stress and pressure for one weekend. It also doesn't make sense to plan on writing your application essays at the same time that you're preparing for your school exams. Remember, there is more to life than college applications. You have to keep up with your schoolwork, your friends, your family. And you have to maintain your sanity too. Life should also make it onto your calendar. By creating a plan, you can spread the work out over time. By following the plan, you can meet your deadlines and submit your best application. And maybe even have a little fun along the way. [BLANK_AUDIO]