Handwriting Effect in Adobe After Effects

Follow these steps to create handwritten text that writes onto the screen over time in Adobe After Effects

Preparation

Export a still frame from the scene where you want the effect to appear on your video timeline.

Open After Effects and create a new composition.

Import the still photo from your video into After Effects.

Drag your imported file from the project window into the Composition window in the bottom right of your screen.

Step 1.

Create a new text layer and type the name that you want to animate on. Use a simple, sans-serif font like Arial:

Step 2.

Create a new SHAPE LAYER by right-clicking in your composition window and selecting NEW>SHAPE LAYER

Step 3.

With the shape layer highlighted in your composition window, select the pen tool from the top of your screen:

With the pen tool selected, at the top of the screen, turn off FILL by clicking on the word FILL and selecting NONE. Set the STROKE to solid white at 6 px. Draw points around the inside of the first letter. **Click and hold** your mouse button to create control points with rounding handles:

You can always go back and move your points/adjust rounding handles to make your letter look better.

When you're happy with your first letter, make sure that your shape layer is still highlighted in your comp window, and then while holding CMD on your keyboard, create the first point on your second letter and repeat the process. Repeat this process for each letter.

Step 4.

When your whole word is finished, click the small eyeball next to your text layer to make it invisible. Take a look at your word:

If you find that the letters are too narrow, select the shape layer, and at the top of the screen, increase the PX of the stroke until the lines are wide enough. This can be done again at any point from now on.

When that's done, you're ready to animate.

Step 5.

Select your shape layer. Underneath it, you'll see a row that says "Contents." To the right of that word, click the ADD button, and select "TRIM PATHS"

A trim paths menu will appear below. Expand it, and follow these steps in order:

a. In the END row, hit the stopwatch to create a keyrfame where your animation will begin.

b. On your timeline, move the playhead down a second or two, and create another END keyframe.

c. Set the value of your first keyframe to 0%, and leave the second one at 100%

d. Change TRIM MULTIPLE SHAPES to INDIVIDUALLY

Now, if you playback your sequence the letters will write on, but they will do so backward. To change this, change the order of your layers in the comp window so that SHAPE 1 is at the top, SHAPE 2 is second, etc. Then they will write on from first letter to last letter. Adjust the distance between your keyframes to change the speed of the effect.

Step 6.

To export, follow these steps:

a. Set the target export area on your timeline (bottom of the two grey sliders)

b. FILE>EXPORT>ADD TO RENDER QUEUE

c. In OUTPUT MODULE, set CHANNELS to RGB+ALPHA

d. Set the OUTPUT TO to whatever makes sense.

e. Import your animation into your editing project and lay it over your video.