Easy Write-On

User Guide

Version 1.1.0 · Nov 13, 2026 · ExplainIt Video

What Easy Write-On does

Easy Write-On turns any text layer into a handwriting animation in one click: the letters are written stroke by stroke, in a natural order and direction, with any font installed on your system.

The usual way to get this effect is slow. Trim Paths on a text outline draws the outline of each letter, not a pen stroke, so animators draw a centre line per letter by hand and use it as a matte. Easy Write-On does that work for you: it finds the centre line of every letter, decides which stroke comes first and which way it runs, and builds the matte with live controls.



A write-on in progress: "Dream" is drawn stroke by stroke with the pen tip, "big" is still to come.

Install and open the panel

Easy Write-On is tested with After Effects 2026 and newer on Windows.

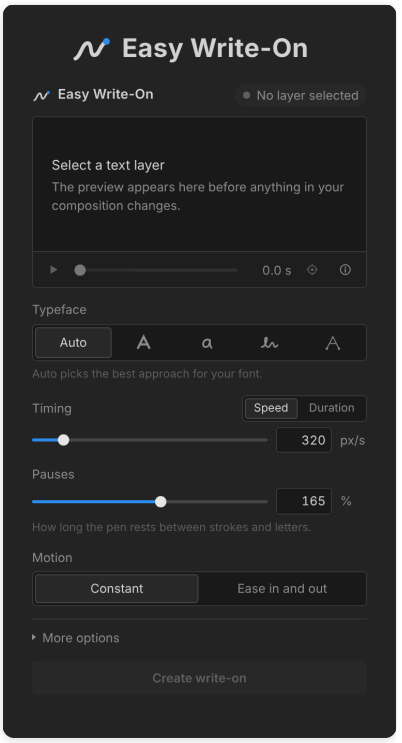
1. Install the `.zxp` with the aescripts + aeplugins manager or any ZXP installer. Without a ZXP on Windows: unzip the download and double-click `install_windows.bat`.
2. Restart After Effects.
3. Open **Window › Extensions › Easy Write-On**. Dock the panel wherever you like; it remembers your settings.

The panel at a glance

Everything happens in one panel, top to bottom: pick a layer, check the preview, adjust, create.

1. **Layer**: the layer you selected in the timeline. Green means it can be written; amber means pick one text or shape layer.

2. **Preview**: the text writes itself here, with a dot for the pen tip. Nothing in your composition changes yet.
3. **Play and scrub**: play, pause or drag through the preview; the time shows where you are.
4. **Typeface**: how the letters are written: Auto, sans/serif, handwriting, connected script or single-line.
5. **Timing**: a writing speed in pixels per second, or a fixed duration in seconds.
6. **Pauses**: how long the pen rests between strokes and letters.
7. **Motion**: constant speed, or easing in and out.
8. **More options**: matte width, start time, stroke order view, language and license.
9. **Create write-on**: builds the animation in your composition. After that, buttons for Create again, Remove, Pen tip and Particles appear.



The panel, from layer to Create.

Create your first write-on

A first write-on takes four steps and under a minute.

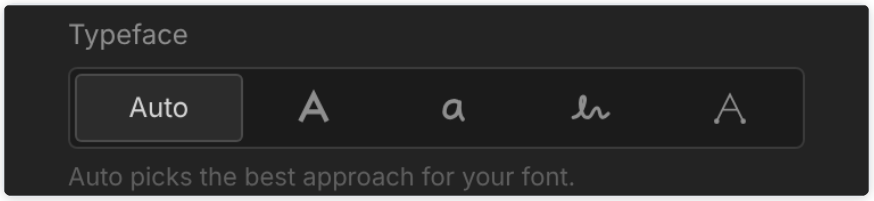
1. **Select a text layer** in your composition. A shape layer works too, such as a logo or single-line artwork. The preview loads by itself.
2. **Check the preview.** Leave Typeface on Auto unless the result looks off, then set timing, pauses and motion. The preview follows every change.
3. **Put the playhead** where the writing should start. Prefer the layer's in-point? Choose it under More options.
4. **Click Create write-on.** The panel builds the animation and tells you how many strokes it made and how long it runs.



The finished write-on, playing back in your composition.

Typeface types

Leave Typeface on **Auto** in most cases: it checks whether your letters touch each other or are drawn as lines, and picks the matching approach. The hint under the buttons tells you what it found.



Typeface: Auto, sans/serif, handwriting, connected script and single-line.

Type	Best for	How it writes
Sans / serif	Regular fonts such as Poppins, Montserrat, Lato	Stems top to bottom, bowls counter-clockwise, crossbars, dots and accents last
Handwriting	Handwriting fonts with separate letters, such as Caveat or Kalam	The same rules, tolerant of rough, uneven edges
Connected script	Script fonts such as Dancing Script or Pacifico	Each word in one continuous motion; dots, accents and t-bars after the word
Single-line	Engraving and plotter fonts made of lines, single-line art from Illustrator	Follows the lines themselves; the matte takes the text's stroke width

> **Single-line fonts have no fill.** Give the text a stroke (and no fill) in the Character panel, otherwise it stays invisible. The preview then shows the lines being drawn.

> **Most fonts just work.** Easy Write-On has been tested on 100 of the most common fonts and writes them cleanly. A few decorative or unusual fonts can come out a little differently from how you would draw them by hand. When that happens, switch the Typeface type, or set the start, order and direction yourself (see the next section).

Choose start, order and direction

If a letter is written in an odd way, set it yourself in the preview: where each stroke starts, the order of the strokes, and which way the pen moves. This helps with decorative capitals and script fonts, such as the A in Kunstler Script or the e in Alex Brush.

1. Load the preview and click the **target icon** at the right of the playback bar. A help card opens under the preview. The info icon next to the target shows the same card at any time.
2. Every stroke now shows its start dot, a number for its place in the letter's writing order, and small arrows along its whole length for the direction.
3. Change what you need:

Action	What it does
Click a stroke	Writes that stroke next, starting where you click: at an end, halfway along the stroke, or on a loop. Click strokes one by one to set the order (1, 2, 3).
Click a dot	Reverses that stroke's direction.
Shift-click a stroke	Reverses the direction here (only the loop, if the stroke has one).
Ctrl-click a stroke	Writes this stroke last (after the body, before the dots).
Alt-click a letter	Back to automatic for this letter: order, starts and directions.

Click **Done** in the card, or the target icon, to play the preview again. Your changes turn green, or amber when you set a stroke to write last. They apply to that letter in that font, at any size and in every project, and Create write-on uses them. Strokes you don't click follow in their automatic order. To clear everything, click *Reset all letters to default* at the bottom of the help card, or open More options and click *Reset custom start points*.

Timing, pauses and motion

Three settings shape the rhythm; the preview plays the result straight away.

- **Timing › Speed** keeps the pen at a steady pace in pixels per second (around 320–600 is natural), so longer text takes longer.
- **Timing › Duration** fits the whole text into a fixed number of seconds, handy when the edit is locked. Switching to Duration starts from what the current speed produces.
- **Pauses** sets how long the pen rests between strokes and between letters, from 0 % (no rest) to 300 %. In connected script the letter pause falls between words only.
- **Motion › Ease in and out** starts and ends the writing softly; the keyframes in After Effects get the same easing.

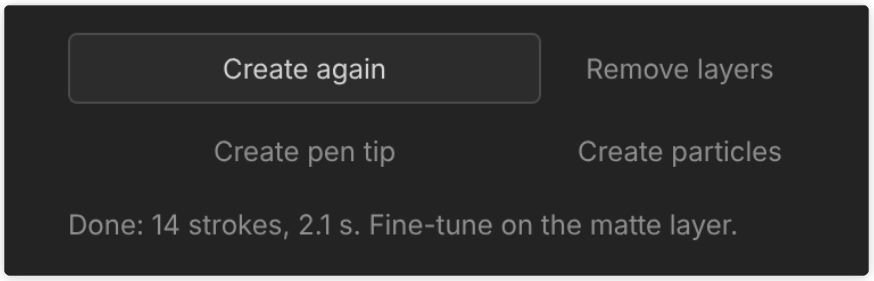
More options

Open **More options** for the settings you rarely need.

Option	What it does
Matte width	Widens or narrows every pen stroke. Raise it to 110–120 % if thin edges don't appear.
Starts at	The playhead (current time) or the layer's in-point.
Show stroke order and direction	Draws each stroke's path, its start dot and its number in the preview, so you can see exactly how a letter will be written.
Load the preview automatically	Off: the preview loads only when you click it.
Language	English or Nederlands. By default the panel follows the language of After Effects.
Cross t's (connected script)	In connected script, choose when the bar of a t or f is drawn: right after its own letter, or saved until the end of the word together with the dots. Default is after each letter.
License	Opens the license window: activate, or deactivate on this computer.

Pen tip and particles NEW

After you create a write-on, two extra buttons let you add a visible pen and a spark of motion at the tip. Both sit next to Create again and Remove, and both toggle: the button changes to *Remove pen tip* or *Remove particles* once added.



After Create write-on: Create again, Remove layers, Create pen tip and Create particles.

Button	What it does
Create pen tip	Adds a pen or marker tip that rides along with the writing, exactly at the point where the stroke is being drawn. Handy for a visible "hand drawing" look. Remove it the same way.
Create particles	Adds a small burst of particles at the pen tip, like ink spray or chalk dust, following the stroke as it writes.

> **Particles now stop by themselves.** When the writing reaches its end, the particle emitter switches off and the last particles fade out, so you don't get a cloud that keeps spraying after the text is finished. Nothing to set: it follows the write-on's own end automatically.

Both effects are ordinary After Effects layers, so you can restyle them freely: change the pen-tip graphic, or open the particle controls (CC Particle Systems II) to change colour, size and amount. Remove layers takes them away together with the write-on.

> **Particles stay 2D.** The particle trail uses CC Particle Systems II, a 2D effect that follows the pen tip in the flat composition. If you switch the write-on layers to 3D, the particles no longer line up with the tip. Keep these layers 2D, or precompose first and make the precomp 3D.

What gets created in After Effects

Easy Write-On adds two layers above your text and switches the original off; nothing is rendered or baked, so everything stays editable. The matte holds one stroke per pen stroke. Its Trim Paths are driven by expressions from the matte layer's Effect Controls, so you fine-tune the whole animation in one place:

Control	What it does
Progress	0–100 %. Two keyframes; move them to change the duration, ease them for a different rhythm.
Stroke pause	Rest at every pen lift within a letter, in pixels of writing length.
Letter pause	Rest between letters (between words in connected script).
Matte width %	Makes all strokes wider or narrower.

The matte is parented to the letters, so any animation on the original layer's transform carries over. Each stroke can also be edited by hand; the groups are named "Letter X - stroke Y".

> **Text is captured as a snapshot.** Easy Write-On reads your text exactly as it looks at the moment you click Create, and draws that. Transform animation on the layer (position, scale, rotation) still carries over through the parenting. But expressions and text animators that change the letters themselves, such as a source-text expression or a per-character animator, are not followed. Create the write-on from the final text; if the words need to change, click Remove layers, edit the text, and create again.

Create again or remove

After you create a write-on, the panel offers follow-ups instead of the main button.

- **Create again** removes the write-on it just made and builds a new one with the current settings. Use it to try another speed, pause or typeface type.
- **Remove layers** deletes the matte and the letter layer (and any pen tip or particles) and switches your original text layer back on, as if nothing happened.

To change the text itself: click Remove layers, edit the text, then click Create write-on again.

Trial and license

The trial has every feature, including the live preview, but writes only the first 10 characters of a layer; the rest stays hidden.

1. Click **Trial** next to the panel name.
2. Enter your license code and click **Activate**.
3. The Trial label disappears. Manage or deactivate the license later under More options › License.

Tips and troubleshooting

Most issues are solved by the layer selection or one setting.

You see	Do this
The layer chip is amber	Select exactly one text or shape layer.
Thin edges or corners stay invisible at the end	Raise Matte width to 110–120 %, or the Matte width % control on the matte layer.
A letter writes in an odd order	Try another Typeface type, or switch on Show stroke order to see what happens. Edit that stroke's group in the matte if needed.
Single-line text is invisible	Give the text a stroke (and no fill) in the Character panel.
Extra connecting lines in a single-line font	The font closes its lines itself (common in CAD fonts); After Effects draws them too. Use a single-line font made for video.
Particles keep spraying after the text	Rebuild the particles with the Create particles button on this version; the emitter now switches off at the end on its own.
Building takes a while	Long texts make hundreds of strokes; the panel says when it will take a moment.
"This panel isn't running inside After Effects"	Open it from Window › Extensions inside After Effects.

Known limitations: serifs are written as short separate strokes at the end of a letter, and with very heavy fonts an occasional letter may be written in an unusual order.