

Adobe After Effects 3.0

Tips & Techniques



Animating Adobe Photoshop layers



Filtering part of a layer



Making text gleam



Putting a layer into orbit



Using type as a traveling matte

Click an icon to see the movie. Click a title to browse the step-by-step instructions.



ANIMATING ADOBE PHOTOSHOP LAYERS

One way to create a movie in After Effects is to import a finished Adobe Photoshop 3.0 file. After Effects maintains the layers, modes, and opacity settings that were assigned in Adobe Photoshop. You can use After Effects to add motion or modify settings over time.

This tip is optimized for print. You can browse the steps on-screen, or print pages 2–3. To return to the opening screen, [click here](#).

To use this technique, prepare a layered document in Adobe Photoshop 3.0. If the document has a higher resolution than you need, save a copy at the resolution you want to use in After Effects. This is more efficient than resampling each frame in After Effects.

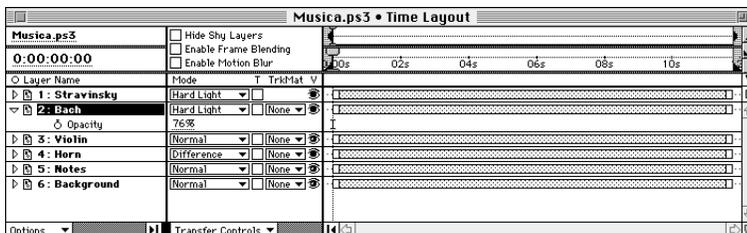


Note: Sometimes layers in an Adobe Photoshop document get clipped to the size of the canvas. To ensure that layers remain whole in the Adobe Photoshop document, make the canvas size large enough to display the largest layer.

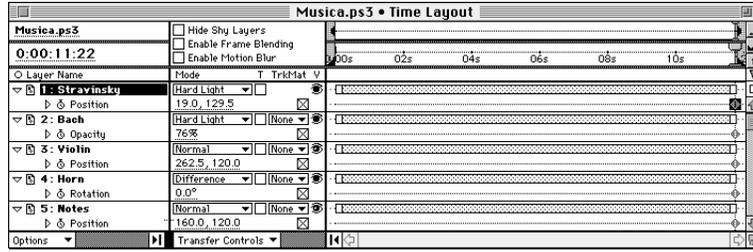
1 Create a new project in After Effects. Choose File > Import Footage > Photoshop 3.0 as Comp. Locate and select the Adobe Photoshop 3.0 file, and click OK. The Project window lists a folder and a composition with the same names as the Adobe Photoshop document. The folder contains the footage items that correspond to the layers of the composition.



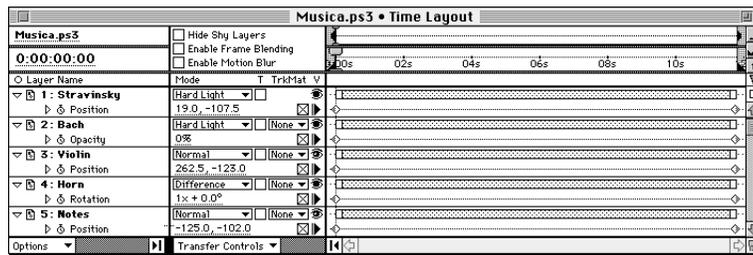
2 In the Project window, double-click the composition to display it. After Effects preserves the opacity, transfer modes, and order assigned to each layer in Adobe Photoshop.



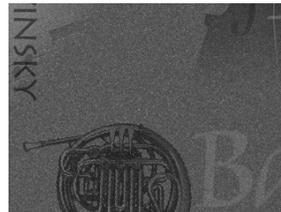
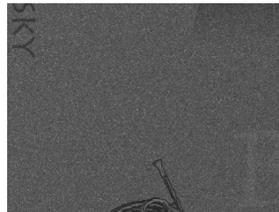
3 Because the composition is in its finished state, begin modifying layers by setting keyframes at the end of the composition. Move the current-time marker to the end of the composition and set keyframes for the layers that you want to move or change over time. Do not change the properties for these keyframes.

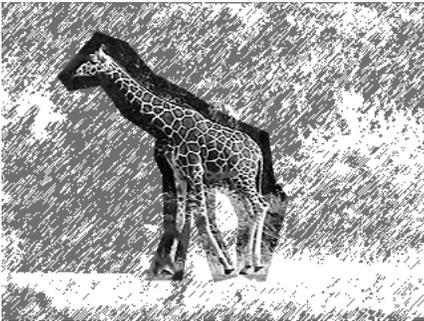


4 Move the current-time marker to the beginning of the composition. Adjust the property settings for each layer that changes over time. In this example, we changed the opacity and positions of the text layers to make them fade into the frame. We also changed the positions of the Violin and Notes layers so that they move into the frame. We altered the position and rotation properties of the Horn layer to make it spin into the frame.



5 Preview the composition. The layers move smoothly into place.





FILTERING PART OF A LAYER

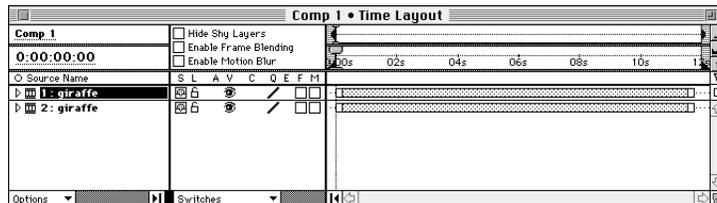
You can apply an effect to a portion of layer by duplicating the layer, creating a mask, and applying an effect to one of the layers. The mask isolates the area that you want to modify. This tip shows you how use a mask to apply an effect to part of a video and how to animate the mask over time. For more information, see “Working with a Mask” on page 199 of the *Adobe After Effects User Guide*.

This tip is optimized for print. You can browse the steps on-screen, or print pages 4–5. To return to the opening screen, [click here](#).

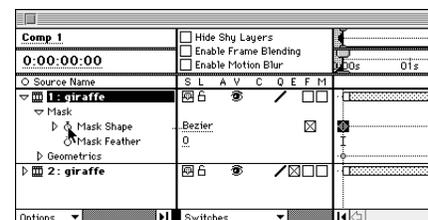
To use this technique, you need a video clip. You can also use a still image and change the effect over time.



1 Create a composition with the video layer. Select the layer in the Composition window and choose Edit > Duplicate (Command+D).



2 Open the Layer window for the top layer and create a mask to isolate one of the elements in the image. To modify the mask over time, set a keyframe for the Mask property at the beginning of the composition. In this example, we created a mask that loosely outlines the giraffe.



3 Apply an effect to one of the layers. In this example, we selected the bottom layer and applied the Gallery Effects Graphic Pen filter. We set the foreground color to gray.



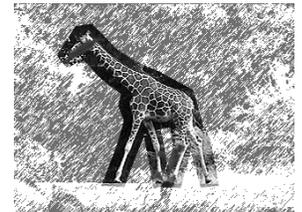
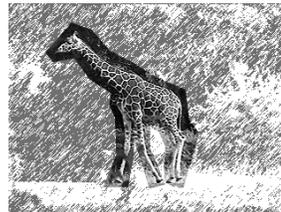
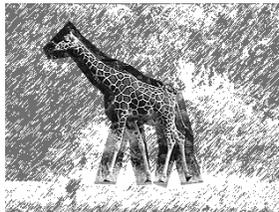
Note: Step 3 can also be done before step 2.

4 Advance the movie one frame (Command+Right Arrow) and adjust the mask to fit the element. In this example, we also changed the opacity of the mask layer at the end of the composition to make the giraffe gradually blend with the effect.



Note: You can also advance the movie several frames and then adjust the mask; After Effects will interpolate the mask shape for the other frames. For best results when skipping frames, maintain the same number of points for the mask from beginning to end.

5 Preview the composition. In this example, the effect is applied to the background layer, and the mask isolates the giraffe as it crosses the frame.



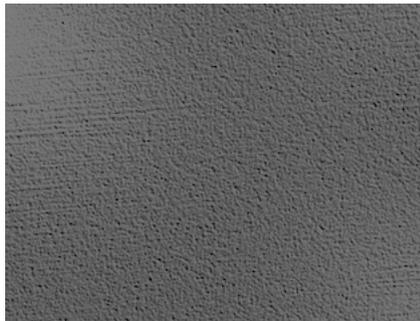


MAKING TEXT GLEAM

In After Effects, you can use a duplicate of a layer to create a matte with a complex shape. In this tip, you'll use this technique to create a highlight that moves across the type, but not the background.

This tip is optimized for print. You can browse the steps on-screen, or print pages 6–8. To return to the opening screen, [click here](#).

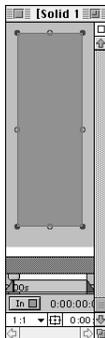
To use this technique, you need display type, which you can create using Adobe Illustrator or Adobe Photoshop. In this example, we created the type in Adobe Illustrator, kerned it, and converted the characters to paths to preserve the typographical changes. We created the optional background in Adobe Texture Maker.



1 Import the text and the background items into After Effects and use them to create a new composition.

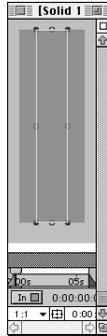


2 Choose Layer > New Solid (Command+Y) to create a solid. The height of the solid must be larger than the tallest character (including ascender and descender), and the color must be lighter than the text. In this example, we created a gray solid that is 70-by-220 pixels. This solid is the highlight layer.



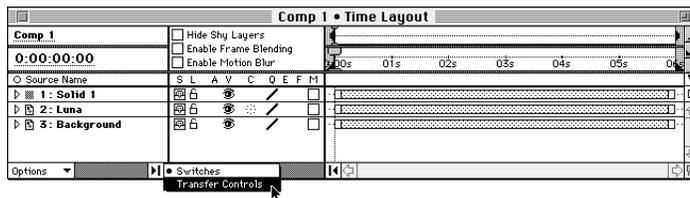
Note: You can skip steps 2 and 3 if you create the highlight layer in Adobe Photoshop.

3 Choose Layer > Mask > Mask Feather (Command+Shift+F) and feather the mask of the solid horizontally. In this example, the mask is feathered by 30 pixels. Open the highlight's Layer window. Move the left and right sides of the mask toward the center until the highlight layer is a solid line of color in the middle and the sides gradually fade and become transparent. Close the Layer window.



Note: The width of the feathered area straddles the mask edge, half inside and half outside the edge. For a softer edge, the mask should be smaller than the layer area.

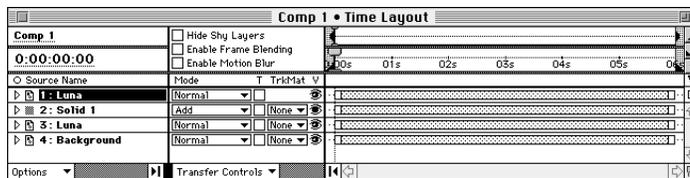
4 Choose Transfer Controls from the pop-up menu at the bottom of the Time Layout window to display the Transfer Controls panel. Select the highlight layer and choose Add from the Mode pop-up menu.



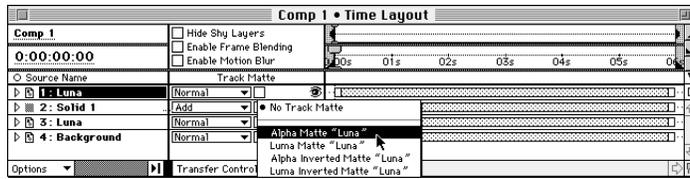
5 Rotate and animate the highlight layer. In this example, we rotated the highlight layer 19 degrees. Then we created keyframes and positioned the layer so it moves back and forth across the text.



6 Select the text layer and choose Edit > Duplicate (Command + D). Move the copy of the text layer so that it's the first layer in the composition.



7 Select the highlight layer in the Time Layout window. Choose Layer > Mode > Alpha Matte.

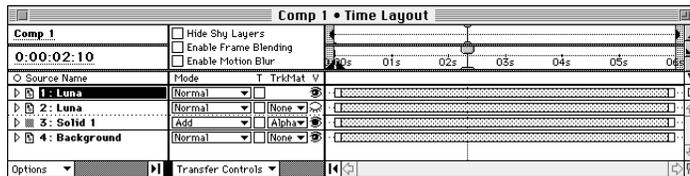


8 Preview the composition. The highlight layer moves back and forth within the text, but not outside the text.



Vary the highlight

9 For a slightly different effect, move the bottom text layer to the top of the layer stack. Then offset the top layer by several pixels. In this example, we moved the text layer to the right by 2 pixels and down 2 pixels.



10 Preview the composition. The subtle highlight follows the edge of the text.



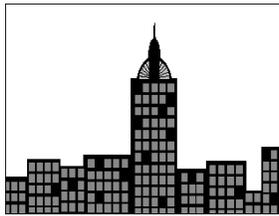


PUTTING A LAYER INTO ORBIT

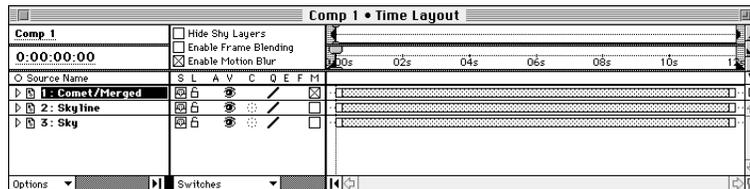
Splitting layers is a useful technique for making one layer appear to orbit another one. When you split a layer, both resulting layers contain all the properties and keyframes that of the original layer. This lets you change the stacking order of the layers without altering the properties of the moving layers.

This tip is optimized for print. You can browse the steps on-screen, or print pages 9–11. To return to the opening screen, [click here](#).

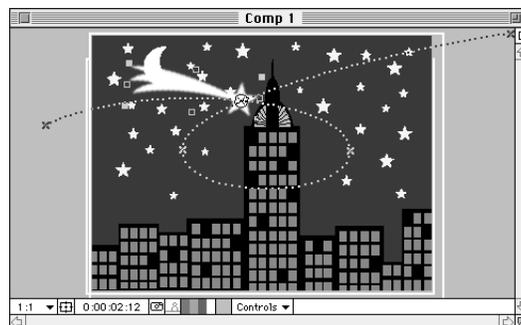
To use this technique, you need two footage items. One item must be surrounded by transparent areas, like the skyscraper in this example. The other item must fit completely within the transparent area of the first item. In this example, the comet fits completely into the area surrounding the tower of the skyscraper. In this example, we also used a background to create the Sky layer.



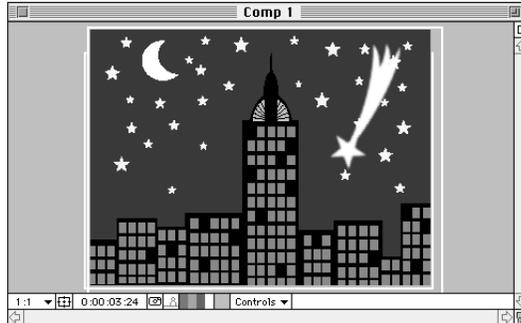
1 Import the footage items into After Effects and use them to create a new composition. Make sure the layer that will move is on top. In this example, the Comet layer is on top of the Sky layer.



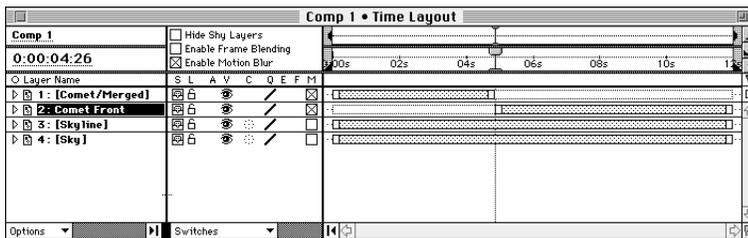
2 Animate the orbiting layer, and modify all the properties of the moving layer that you want to change. Preview the motion and adjust the motion path if necessary. In this example, we created a Bezier motion path so that the Comet layer enters the frame from the left, orbits the Skyscraper, and exits the frame at the right. We also selected the Comet layer and chose Layer > Geometrics > Auto-Orient Rotation so the Comet layer rotates to follow the motion path.



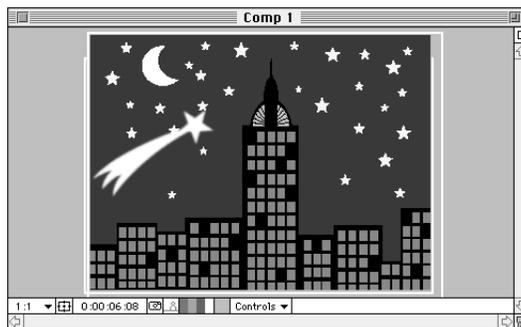
3 Move the current-time marker to the point in the composition where the orbiting layer changes its relationship to the static layer. In this example, we moved the current-time marker to the point where the comet appears on the right side of the skyscraper. This is the point where the Comet layer will move from behind the Skyscraper layer to in front of it.



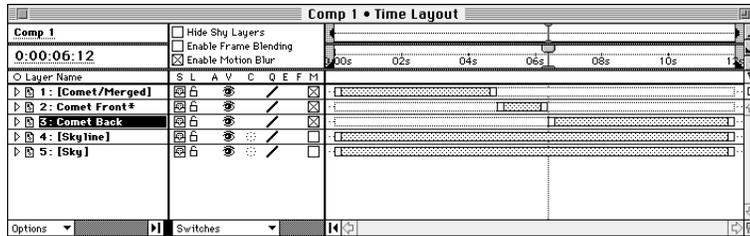
4 With the orbiting layer still selected, choose Edit > Split Layer (Command+ Shift+D) to split the layer. A copy of the orbiting layer appears in the Time Layout window. The out point of the original layer and the in point of the new layer are both at the current time. Each layer contains the keyframes for the duration of the layer. Rename the new layer so you can identify the copy. In this example, we named the new layer Comet Front.



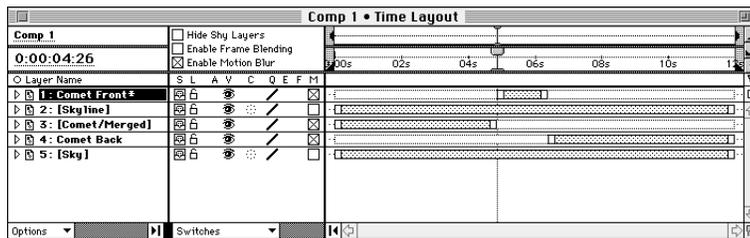
5 Select the new layer and move the current-time marker to the next point in the composition where the orbiting layer changes its relationship to the static layer. In this example, we moved the current-time marker to the point where the comet is on the left side of the skyscraper. This is the point where the Comet layer moves behind the Skyscraper layer.



6 Choose Edit > Split Layer (Command+ Shift+D) to split the layer. Rename the new layer so you can identify the copy. In this example, we named the new layer Comet Back. In this example, we named the new layer Comet Back.



7 Reorder the layers so that the animation is accurate. In this example, we moved the Comet and Comet Back layers behind the Skyscraper layer.



8 Preview the composition. The moving layer now moves around the static layer. In this example, the comet orbits the skyscraper.



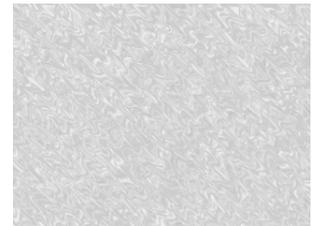


USING TYPE AS A TRAVELING MATTE

In After Effects you can use a complex shape, such as text, as a *track matte*. A track matte is a layer whose luminance or alpha channel is used to manipulate the alpha channel of another layer. For more information about track mattes, see “Creating Layer Transparency Using Track Matte” on page 210 of the *Adobe After Effects User Guide*. This lesson demonstrates how to create two types of traveling mattes: one that moves over a still image and one that moves with a video clip.

This tip is optimized for print. You can browse the steps on-screen, or print pages 12–15. To return to the opening screen, [click here](#).

To use these techniques, you need display type, a video clip or still image, and a background layer. You can create the display type using Adobe Illustrator or Adobe Photoshop. In this example, we created the type in Adobe Illustrator, kerned it, and converted the characters to paths to preserve the typographical changes. We created the background in Adobe Texture Maker.



Create a matte that travels over a still image

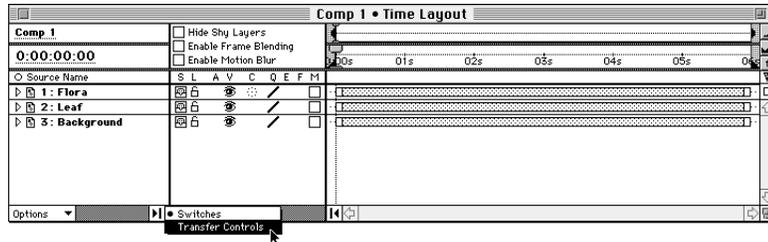
1 Create a composition with the text and still image layers on top of the background layer.



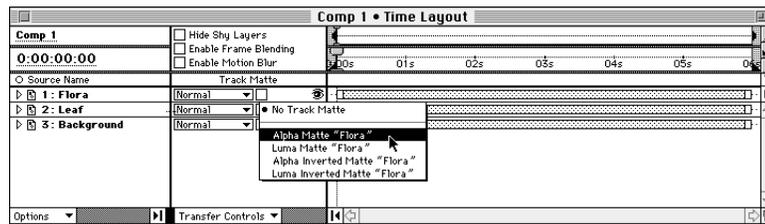
2 Animate the text layer. In this example, the text traverses the frame from right to left.



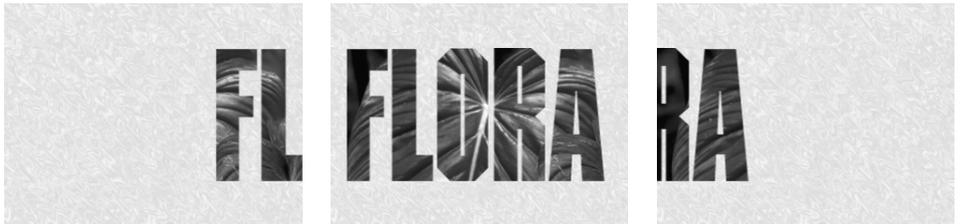
3 Choose Transfer Controls from the pop-up menu at the bottom of the Time Layout window to display the Transfer Controls panel.



4 Select the still image layer and choose Alpha Matte from the TrkMat pop-up menu for the layer.



5 Preview the composition. The still image shows through the text as the text moves across the composition.

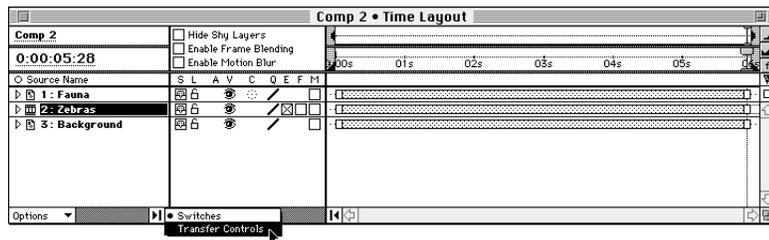


The layers required for the following steps are the same as for the previous steps. In this example, we used different text and a video clip to emphasize the techniques' different results.

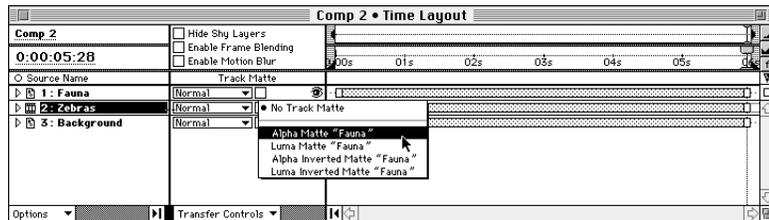


Create a matte that travels with video

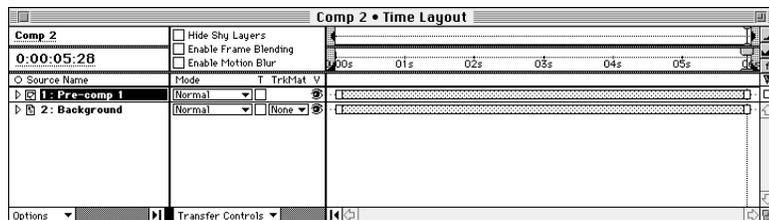
1 Create a composition with the type and video layers on top of the background layer. Choose Transfer Controls from the pop-up menu at the bottom of the Time Layout window to display the Transfer Controls panel.



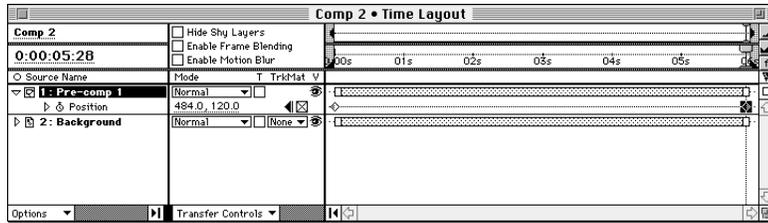
2 Select the video layer, and choose Alpha Matte from the TrkMat pop-up menu for the layer. The video layer shows through the text.



3 Select the type and video layers, and choose Layer > Precompose (Command+Shift+C). After Effects creates a composition from these layers, and uses the precomposed composition as a layer.



4 Animate the Precomp 1 layer. In this example, the composition traverses the frame from right to left.



5 Preview the composition. The video shows through the type as they traverse the screen together.

