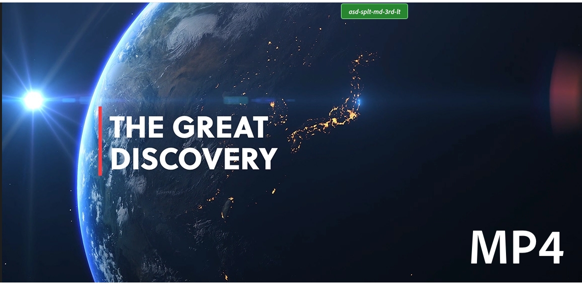
VIDEO

Explore great title sequences and learn how to create your own.

Opening title sequences tell people what they're watching and who made it, but they can do so much more. Find out how to get viewers excited for what happens next.

Explore Adobe Premiere Pro



JUMP TO SECTION

What makes a good title sequence?

1. Graphics or live action

2. Appropriate run time

3. Tonal consistency

4. A distinctive soundtrack or theme song

5. Engaging motion graphics

6. Unique typeface

How to create your own opening title sequence

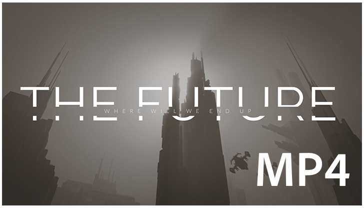
New

What does a title sequence do?

A title sequence presents the name of the work and a list of the people involved in creating it. Typically appearing in the first minutes of a film or video, these sequences set the tone and entice viewers to keep watching.

What makes a good title sequence?

Opening credits have to convey key information like the production company, the title of the film or video, director, cinematographer, lead actors, and others, but the best title sequences creatively capture the essence of the project. Consider the following elements as you begin to brainstorm.


THE FUTURE
WHERE WILL WE END UP
MP4

1. Graphics or live action.
The first decision a title designer has to make is whether to create a sequence driven by graphics or by live action footage. If you choose live footage, do you include clips from the main action? The TV show *Parks and Recreation* takes the live action approach to an extreme, introducing characters and setting with quick clips that play simultaneously in different parts of the frame alongside stock video of parks and nature.

Another option is to use B-roll footage that sets the scene without giving much away. *The Walking Dead* doesn't reveal any characters or main action, but the empty streets, scenes of ruin, and a freeway jammed with abandoned cars leaving the city prepare the viewer for a zombie apocalypse.

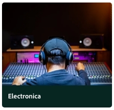
2. Appropriate run time.
Think about the platform, genre, and length of the work. A DIY web series with ten-minute episodes should have a very short main title sequence, while feature films or dramatic TV shows can devote more time to their opening credits. Shows that stream on platforms like Netflix can go totally wild with their intros because people have the option to skip them.

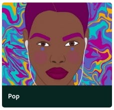
"Generally, a title sequence shouldn't be longer than two minutes," says editor and producer Yazmon Ector. "You want to grab attention, but you don't want the story of the title sequence to draw too much attention away from the actual story."

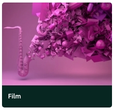
3. Tonal consistency.

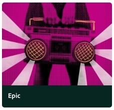
A good opening credit sequence matches the tone and production design of the project. Fast-moving animation and an up-tempo theme song may work perfectly for a thriller or adventure film, but they would give a viewer the wrong impression if they introduced an existential drama about a man searching for his stolen bicycle.

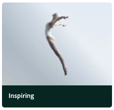
In the David Fincher film *Se7en* (1995), title designer Kyle Cooper built a perfectly horrific opening with tight shots of hands and the villain's obsessively constructed notebooks. Under ominous, industrial music, the opening credits flash with glitchy video effects between quick live-action cuts of dirty fingers holding a razor blade, then bandaged fingers handling strange photos and pages full of dense writing or redacted text. The viewer senses that bad things are about to happen, and the film maintains that dark tone and delivers on its promise.

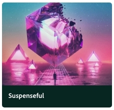

Electronica


Pop


Film


Epic


Inspiring


Suspenseful

4. A distinctive soundtrack or theme song.

Along with the imagery, the background music establishes a mood and generates emotion. The animated title sequence for Steven Spielberg's *Catch Me if You Can* (2002) begins with a cool, jazzy song that perfectly sets up the 1960s-era cat-and-mouse game between a con artist and an FBI agent, which plays out in the titles and the film that follows.

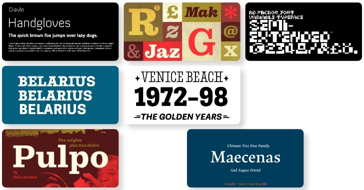
Danny Elfman's score for Tim Burton's *Beetlejuice* (1988) is another classic. The titles begin with high, trilling notes and the first lines of Harry Belafonte's "Banana Boat (Day-O)" before the main title card appears. Then the whole orchestra launches into a zany romp while the camera pans over a rural New England town. Energetic horns, strings, and drums accompany the camera as it flies out of town and the landscape morphs into a 3D model of a house. The music fades out just as a seemingly giant spider climbs over the roof, setting up the spooky, funny action to come.

5. Engaging motion graphics.

Animation is a great way to pull viewers in while you show the credits, and it doesn't have to be complicated. In the title sequence for the classic Alfred Hitchcock film *North by Northwest* (1959), graphic designer Saul Bass creates intersecting lines that spread across the frame. Steeply angled titles drop in from above or rise from below before the main title floats up from the bottom of the frame. The lines then cross dissolve into the windows of an office building reflecting the lights of city traffic.

Maurice Binder, the title designer behind several James Bond movies, used more complicated animation for *Dr. No* (1962). Influenced by modernist art, Binder employed colorful circles and squares in motion, moving across the frame, stacking and flashing in time with the theme song. Then colorful silhouettes of women dancing to drums to give viewers a sense of the festive island setting for this spy adventure.

The title sequence for *Crazy Rich Asians* (2018) is a perfect example of more recent creative use of motion graphics. In time with joyful music, gemstones, butterflies, bracelets, lotus flowers, and synchronized swimmers dance in circles and swirling rows behind the opening credits. "The music is great, but it's also the assets and how they respond to the music in interesting patterns that pull you in for the ride," Ector says.



6. A unique typeface.
Whether you juxtapose hand-drawn lettering with a standard font like in *Se7en* or lengthen the letters so they become elements in the animated illustrations, like in *Catch Me if You Can*, you can have a lot of fun with fonts in title sequences.

If your budget is limited, you can create a memorable title sequence using typography only. For inspiration, look at the titles for Gaspar Noé's *Enter the Void* (2019), which set strobing typography to a song that sounds like a dying truck engine. Multiple typefaces in several colors and three languages (French, English, and Japanese) flash quickly on screen and off, preparing the viewer for a film that will shock and confuse them as it follows a Tokyo drug dealer's life after death.

New

How to create your own opening title sequence.

Though many designers create title sequences in Adobe After Effects, you don't have to be a professional motion designer to create a great sequence. Start with a brainstorm and then see what you can do with your best idea.

1. Storyboard.

The only way to know whether a title sequence will resonate with your viewers is to pursue an idea and see how it works. Build a storyboard to flesh out your thoughts. If you want to include live action, collect the clips you want to include. "Go through your footage to see the most action-oriented moments. Find the moments that are most captivating, and put them in their own bins within the project," Ector says.

2. Pick your font and music.

Adobe Fonts are included with every Adobe Creative Cloud subscription. To access stylish fonts in Adobe Premiere Pro, you can browse the fonts in the Creative Cloud desktop app. (Just look for the *f* symbol.) Activate the fonts you like, and they'll appear in your font list the next time you open Premiere Pro.

Whether it's an original song or a track you've licensed, make sure you have the music locked before you start to edit your footage. For music options, check out the Adobe Stock tab in the Essential Sound Panel in Premiere Pro. Search by mood, genre, or keyword.

3. Cut or animate.

Assemble a rough cut of your footage to see if it will pull a viewer into your world. "How can you make it visually interesting, but still tell a little bit of the story?'" Ector asks. If the footage works, you can import your motion graphics template and customize it to fit the project.

In Premiere Pro, you don't have to leave your workspace to add animation to your titles. The Essential Graphics panel has tools to make basic shapes, which you can animate using keyframes. That's also where you can select free, preinstalled motion graphics templates that you can drag and drop right into your timeline.

If you don't find a preinstalled template you like, you can click the Adobe Stock tab to explore its collection of free and premium templates. You can customize these to fit your story without having to do all the motion design work yourself.

Adobe Stock also has media replacement templates that allow you to insert your own footage into templates so you can get that *Parks and Recreation*-style opening with multiple pieces of footage appearing in different sections of the frame.

4. Experiment with effects and looks.

Once you have a tighter cut you can add visual effects and color correction to enhance your title sequence and bring it into line with the mood of the main action. "I'm always looking to see how I can manipulate the film to be something a bit more elevated," Ector says.

Play with different iterations of your opening sequence and show a version or two to your friends. If they're still with you after you get through the titles, you're off to a good start.

Contributor

Yazmon Ector

Share this article

New

mq-qt-sm-ctr

New

Do more with Adobe Premiere Pro.

Start free trial

Learn more

mq-qt-sm-ctr

Not sure which apps are best for you?

Take a minute. We'll help you figure it out.

Get started

You may also like

CaaS_Half-Card_4up ✓

18/22.5 Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, excelio text-overflow …

18/22.5 Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, excelio text-overflow …

18/22.5 Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, excelio text-overflow …

18/22.5 Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, excelio text-overflow …

global-footer ✓

› Creativity & Design

Shop For

- Creative Cloud
- Photoshop
- Photography
- Premiere Pro
- Stock
- Elements 2021

- Document Cloud
- Acrobat
- Sign

- Special Offers
- View Plans & Pricing
- View All Products

For Business

- Creative Cloud for Teams
- Creative Cloud for Enterprise
- Document Cloud for Business

For Education

- Discounts for Students and Teachers
- Schools & Universities

For Mobile

- Apps for iOS
- Apps for Android

Experience Cloud

- What is Experience Cloud
- Analytics
- Experience Manager
- Commerce Cloud
- Marketo Engage
- Workfront

Support

- Download & install
- Help Center
- Community forums
- Enterprise Support
- Genuine Software

Resources

- Adobe Blog
- Adobe I/O

Adobe Account

- Log in to your account

Adobe

- About
- Careers
- Newsroom
- Corporate responsibility
- Investor Relations
- Supply chain
- Trust Center
- Events
- Diversity & inclusion
- Integrity
- COVID-19

Featured downloads Adobe Acrobat Reader Ps Photoshop Ai Illustrator

Change region

Copyright © 2021 Adobe. All rights reserved. / Privacy / Terms of Use / Cookie preferences / Do not sell my personal information / AdChoices