

random screen text

Use randomized text characters that churn away to slowly reveal the word ANARCHY (of course).



a tutorial for : **screen text** : from text anarchy

Text Anarchy



cool tools for text in motion.

[from Digital Anarchy]

f/x tools for revolutionaries.



A pretty common effect is a bunch of random numbers churning away, then slowly revealing a word or phrase. How can we possibly warn the world about hackers if we can't have random bits of data turn into real text?

Obviously, this is necessary and it's pretty simple to do with our Screen Text filter from Text Anarchy. [figure 1]



[figure 1]

00- download & install

Before you start this tutorial, you will want to download the [text_randomST-tute.zip](#) file from our website. This ZIP file contains an After Effects .aep file and QuickTime example movies.

You also need to install our Text Anarchy plugins into your After Effects/Plugins folder. The set will appear in the 'Effect' dropdown menu, in a 'Digital Anarchy' submenu, as eight separate plugins. [figure 2]



[figure 2]

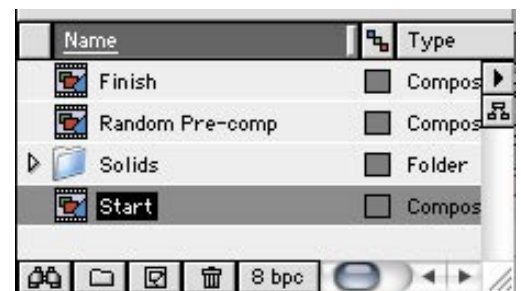
If you are working with the demo version of Text Anarchy, a red 'X' will watermark your footage.

01- project setup

From your download folder, open up the [text_randomST.aep](#) project file in After Effects. The 'Final' comp shows your finished piece.

You can also play the QuickTime movie that's called [text_randomST-final.mov](#) to see the final composition that you will create.

The 'Start' comp is a 320x240 project with a new Solid layer. Alternately, you can create a new comp that's 320x240, and add a Solid layer that's the size of the comp. Name this layer 'Text'. [figure 3]



[figure 3]



02- apply screen text

Apply Screen Text (Effects> Digital Anarchy> Screen Text) to the 'Text' layer. A dialog box will appear that allows you to enter in text, select a font, and set a few options.

Let's make the font a mono-spaced one. This should make it easier to align the letters when revealing the real word. We've chosen OCR-A Extended.

03- type your text

Next, type in the word ANARCHY into the text field.

Lastly, click on the 'Repeat Text' checkbox. Usually Screen Text will display text once for a certain amount of time and then clear it off the screen. By selecting 'Repeat Text', it will continuously repeat the text. [figure 4]



[figure 4]

Click OK. That gives us a little word 'ANARCHY' down in the lower left corner. If we hit render right now, the little word will scroll up the screen. This is completely not what we want. [figure 5]



[figure 5]

04- tweak the setup

First off, we want the word to be big. Twirl down the 'Character Attributes' section and set 'Font Size' to 60.

Now twirl down the 'Main Setup' section and set the position to 120, 130. Set the 'Scroll Speed' to 0. This will put the text in the center of the screen and prevent it from scrolling upwards.

Change both the 'Color' and 'Random Color' to a medium green, so our text looks more matrix-esque.

That's about all we need to do to get the word ANARCHY on the screen. Since it doesn't move and we don't want it to change, we're in good shape. [figure 6]

So far, in this tutorial, we used a basic application of Screen Text to create a single scrolling word, ANARCHY. Now let's take on the random characters.



[figure 6]



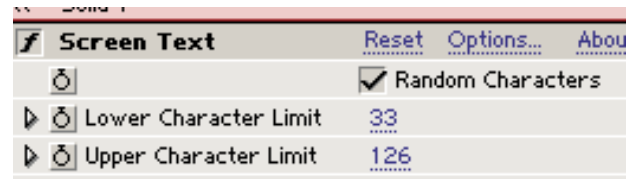
05- duplicate and randomize

It's all about things being Random. Makes life much more interesting, and makes animation more interesting as well.

Duplicate your 'Text' layer and name it 'Random Text'. Turn off the original 'Text' layer to prevent it from getting in the way, and open the Effect window for the 'Random Text' layer.

Click on the 'Random Characters' checkbox to turn ANARCHY into random characters. This obliterates whatever is in the Text dialog box. It's still there, and if you turn off Random Characters, the word ANARCHY will come right back. We want random data for this layer, so leave 'Random Characters' on. [figure 8]

Actually, now we have a big long line of random characters, which isn't what we want. So...



[figure 7]



[figure 8]

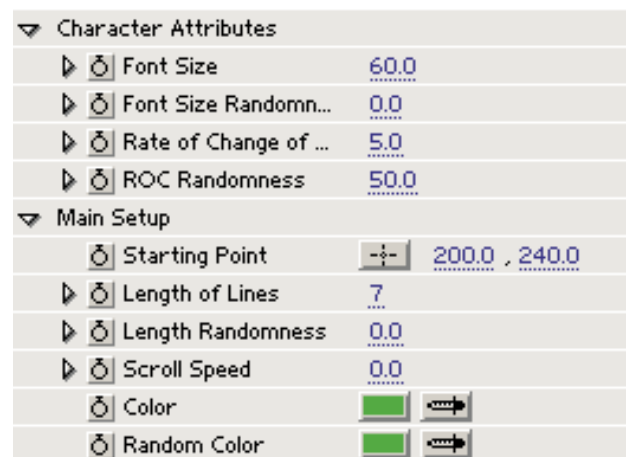
06- length of lines

Twirl down the 'Main Setup' section. This is where we'll take care of that long line of characters. Since ANARCHY has 7 characters in it, that's how many random characters we need as well. Set the 'Length of Lines' parameter to 7 to take care of that.

07- rate of change

Twirl down the 'Character Attributes' section. Change 'Rate of Change' to 5 and 'Rate of Change Randomness' to 50. [figure 9] This will cause all the random characters to not to be in sync with each other as they change.

'Rate of Change' causes the characters to change every 5 frames. By setting 'Randomness' to 50, you create a range (2.5 to 7.5) of values, and each character randomly selects its own 'Rate of Change'. Some characters will change every 3 frames, others every 5 frames, or 6 or 7 frames. This randomness helps vary the look of the animation and makes your composition look more organic.



[figure 9]



08- frequency of overwrite

One last adjustment to make here before moving on. Twirl down the 'Line Spacing' section and set 'Frequency of Overwrite' to 0. [figure 10]



[figure 10]

If there's no scroll speed and there's only a single line sitting around, then 'Frequency of Overwrite' will determine how long Screen Text waits before changing the line out with a new line. For this project, setting a value of 0 keeps 'Frequency of Overwrite' from doing anything. [figure 11]

Our project requires a few mask keyframes for its final phase. Since you're only doing a word or short phrase, that will only take a matter of minutes to set up.



[figure 11]

09- make a pre-comp

First we have to prepare the layer to be masked out. We want the mask to be against a black background and we need to create a mask.

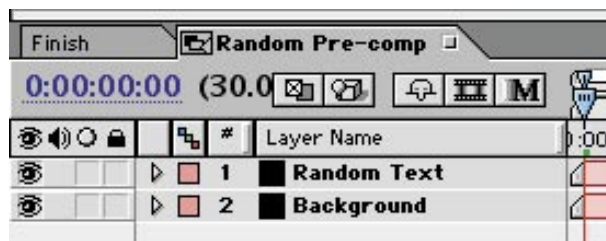
Text Anarchy filters can use masks in many ways. Screen Text isn't normally affected by masks, unless its inside of a pre-comp. That's what we're going to do.

Create a new Solid layer, color it black, and name it 'Background'. Position that layer behind your 'Random Text' layer. [figure 12]

Select both the 'Background' and 'Random Text' layers and pre-compose them (Layer> Pre-compose). Name the pre-comp 'Random Pre-comp' and choose the radial option 'Move All Attributes Into the New Composition'. [figures 13]



[figure 13]



[figure 12]



Now turn on the 'Text' layer that has the word ANARCHY on it. It should be obscured by the 'Random Pre-comp' layer because of the black background inside the pre-comp. [figure 14]



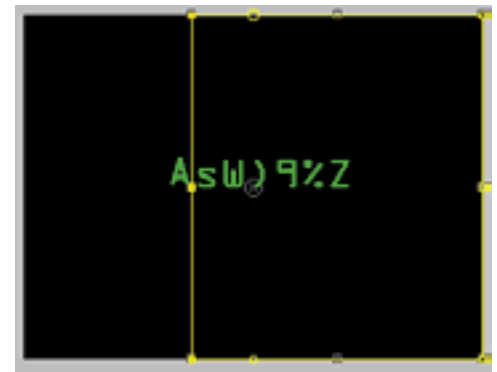
[figure 14]

10- draw your mask

Select the pre-comp in your Timeline. Then select the Rectangle Mask tool in the Toolbox palette.

Move to 00:01:00 on the Timeline.

On the pre-comp, drag out a rectangle shape around all of your text. Then set a keyframe for the Mask Shape. Do this by pressing the 'M' key to reveal the 'Mask Shape' parameter, and clicking the stopwatch to set a keyframe.



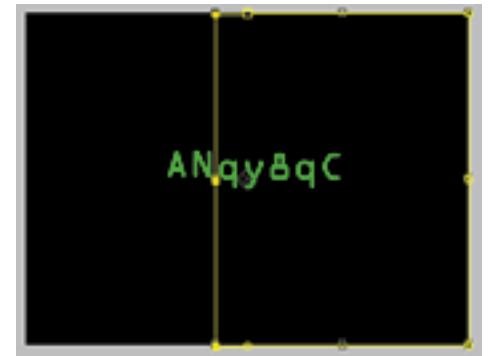
[figure 15]

11- animate your mask

Move to 00:01:20 on the Timeline, 20 frames forward.

Select the two leftmost handles of the mask. You will want to hold down the Apple key (Mac) or Control key (Win) to access the Arrow tool. Alternately you can select the Arrow tool in the Toolbox.

Move the handles to the right, past the first random character. This sets a second keyframe for your mask, and reveals the first letter of the 'Text' layer. Notice that the 'A' from ANARCHY is showing through. [figure 15]



[figure 17]

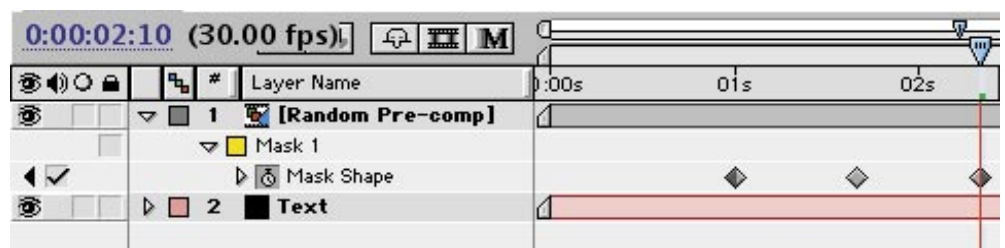
12- animate your mask again

Move forward 20 frames to 00:02:10 on the Timeline.

[figure 16] Move the two mask handles past the next random character, revealing the 'N' from ANARCHY.

[figure 17]

[figure 16]



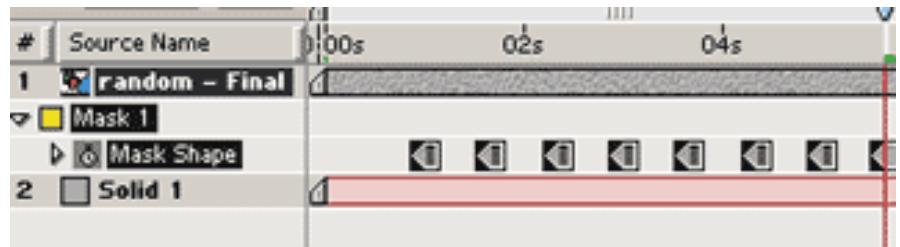


13- repeat as necessary

Now keep repeat this process. [figure 17] Move forward 20 frames and move the mask over one more letter. Do so until all the random characters are removed and the full word ANARCHY is revealed.

Once you're finished, if you play back the animation you'll notice that the mask smoothly moves across the screen. This is great, except that you can see the random character right on top of the ANARCHY character as it's being replaced.

This just isn't going to do! We need to call in the superhero Hold keyframes.



[figure 18]

14- set a hold keyframe

Select all the 'Mask Shape' keyframes. Go to the menu item Animation > Toggle Hold Keyframes. This will prevent the 'in-betweening' that we're seeing. [figure 18]

Now the mask will just jump from position to position, making it appear as if our word is being created out of random characters. [figure 19]

Now the world is safe from all hackers – except for you!



[figure 19]