

STORY BOARDING

import screenplays into After Effects

STORY BOARDING V1.5 DOCUMENTATION

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Introduction

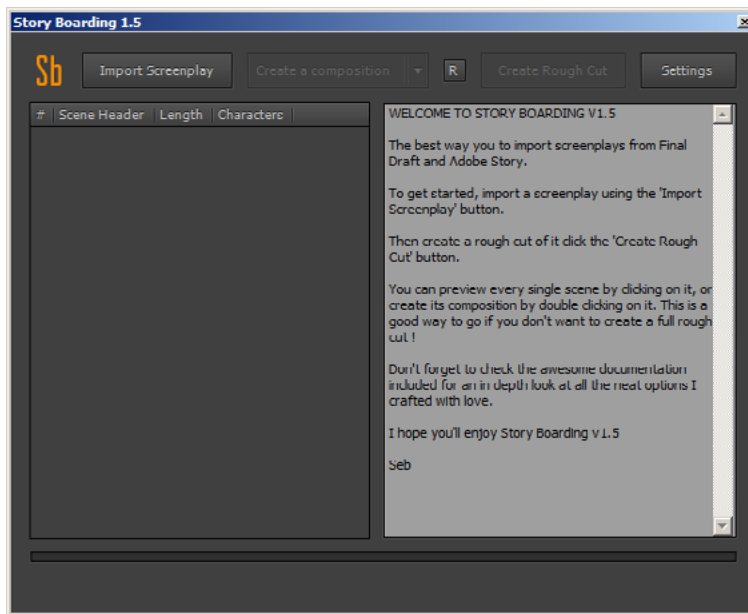
Story Boarding is an After Effects script that allows **Adobe Story** (<http://story.adobe.com>) or **Final Draft** (<http://www.finaldraft.com>) screenplays to be imported inside Adobe After Effects.

You can also import screenplays from any scriptwriting software exporting in the *.fbx file format.

Once imported, you can use your screenplay as a context tool while working on your scene, or you can use it to create a rough cut for you and start building an animatic version of it. Better: you can use it both ways.

Built as a tool to quickly iterate on the [Mythomen Movie Project](#) rough cut, it's the perfect time saver for experimenting with your story to strengthen your style and your creative vision.

Test paces, musics, camera angles, scene layout faster than ever and spend more time refining your art than manipulating complicated tools.



■ Requirements

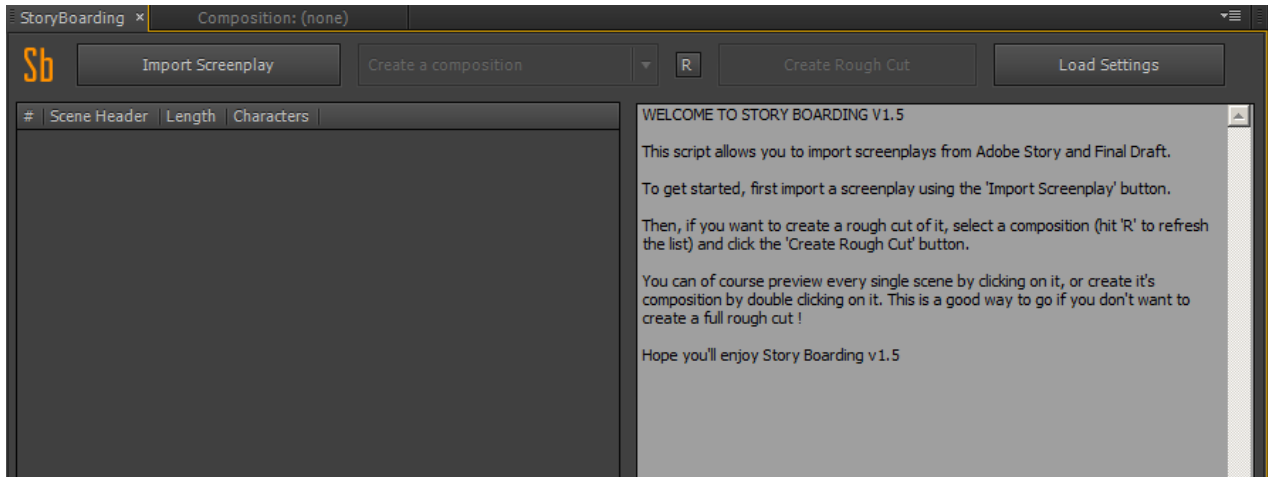
In order to run the Story Boarding, you'll need a copy of Adobe After Effects CS5 or above, and access to Adobe Story (*.astx) or Final Draft (*.fdx) screenplays.

Not ready yet to make the jump to Story Boarding? Fear not, we have a demo version included. The demo version is limited to 7 days of use, and will only import the 10 first scenes of your screenplay. But that should be enough to give you a taste of Story Boarding's power!

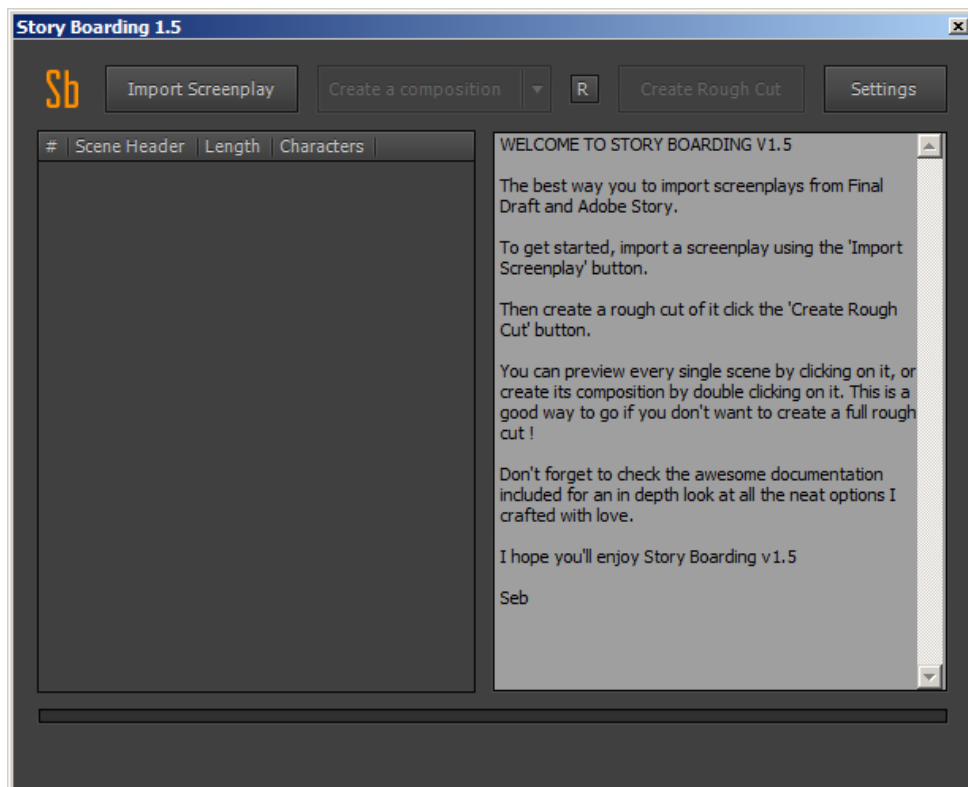
Note that some features are only available in After Effects CS6 and above. We recommend the use of Adobe After Effects 12.2 (CC) and above.

Installation

If you want to use the script as a dockable panel, and open it from the Window menu, copy the StoryBoarding_v1.5.jsxbin file to your After effects ScriptUI Panels folder, located in the /Support Files/Scripts folder of your After Effects installation folder (or package on Mac OS).

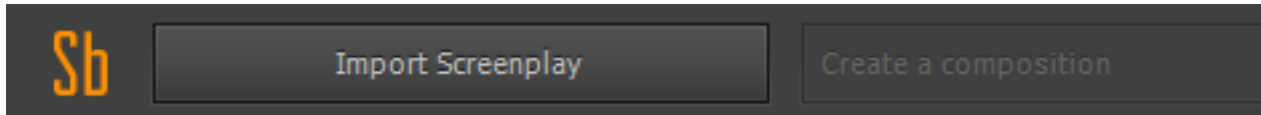


You can also use the script from any folder using the file > scripts > Run script file command inside After Effects, and then selecting the script file (*.jsxbin) from your folder.

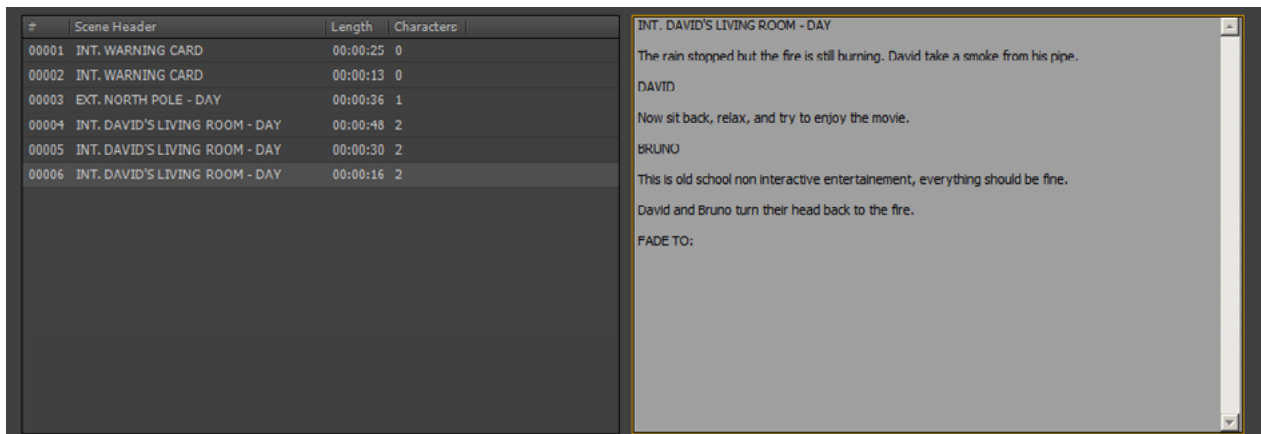


■ Importing a Screenplay

Importing a screenplay has never been so easy. Just click the **Import Screenplay** button and select the file you want to import.



After a couple of seconds, the screenplay will be imported and displayed in the Story Boarding interface.



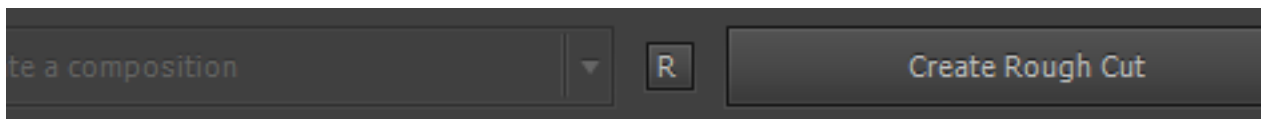
A list of scenes will be displayed on the left pane. The list provides a few handy informations such as the scene number, name, duration and number of talking characters.

From here you can:

- Click on the **Create Rough Cut** button to create a rough cut (see [Creating a Rough Cut](#)) of your whole screenplay
- Click on any scene to display its content on the right pane
- Double-click on any scene to automatically create its composition or open its composition if it was already created.

■ Creating a Rough Cut

You can create a rough cut by clicking the **Create Rough Cut** button.

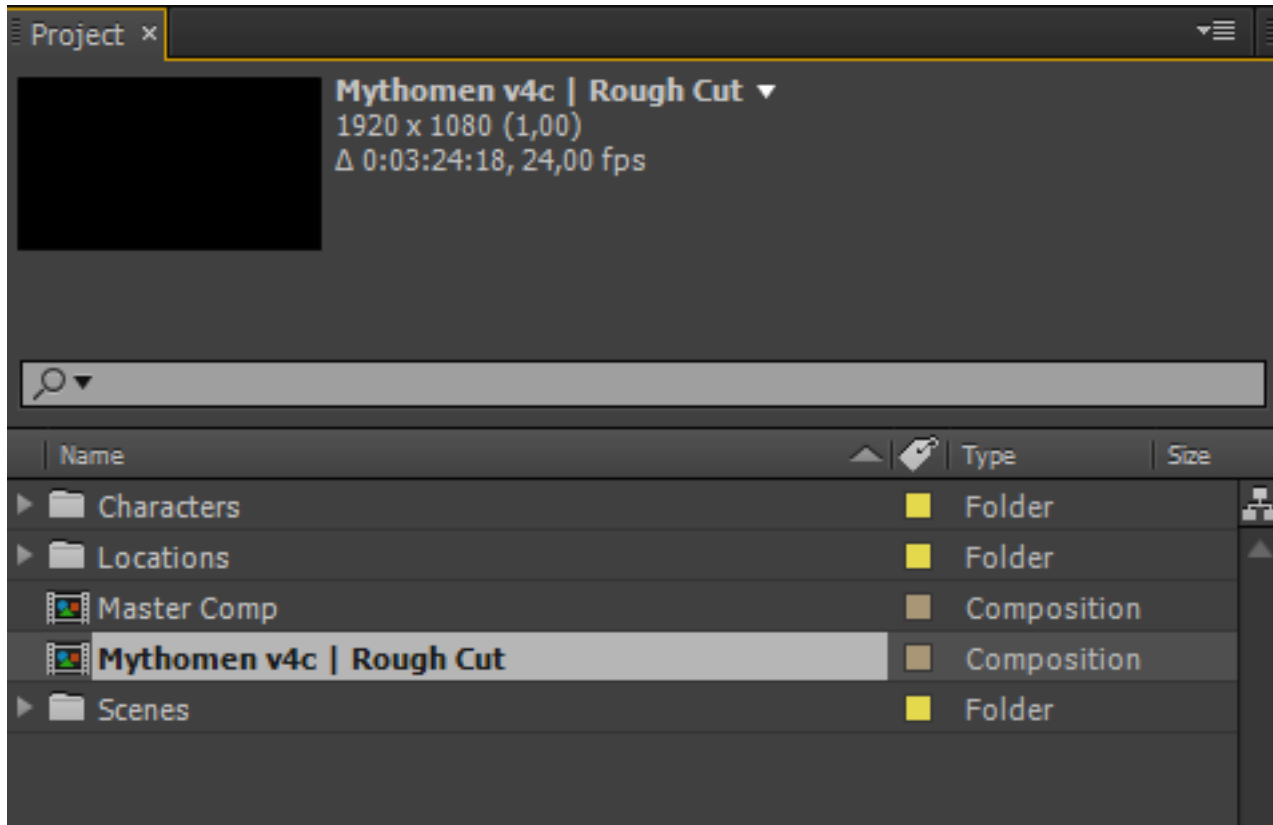


When creating a rough cut without any composition selected in Story Boarding composition dropdown, the rough cut will be created with a default setting of 1920x1080 at 24fps.

You can create and/or use a comp that match your needs. If your composition is not listed in the dropdown menu, click the small **R** button to reload the list. It will scan your project and add every suited compositions in it. Once your composition is selected in the dropdown menu, click **Create Rough Cut** and it will be used as the basis for all the created comps.

If your selected composition have some layers in it (like branding logos, text layers for timecode, ...), they will be imported in the movie composition, and extended to it's duration.

By default, the rough cut will create a main composition named after your screenplay, and three folders.

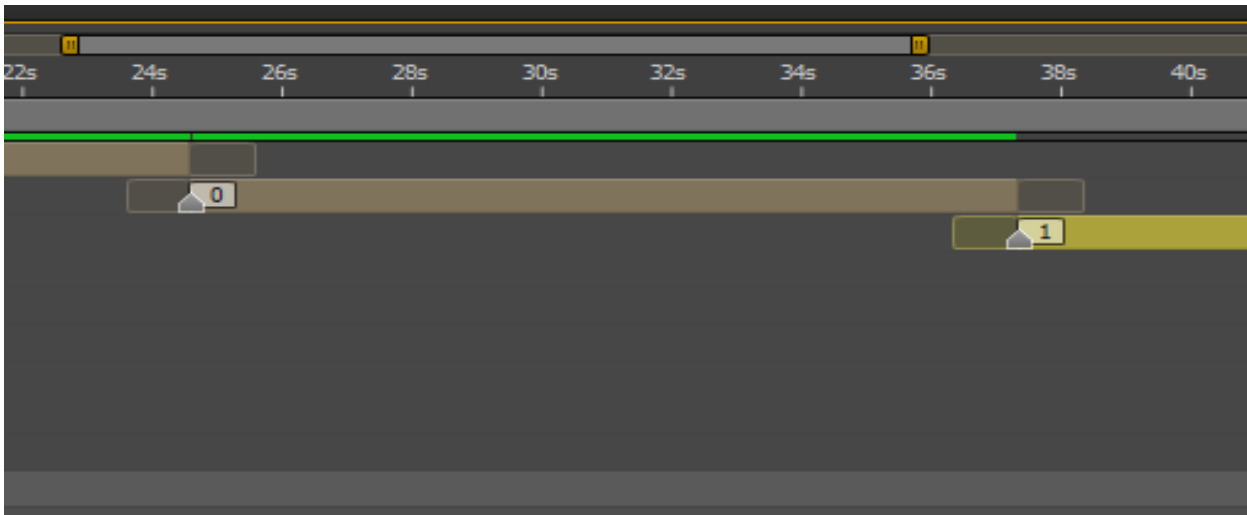


The first folder, **Characters**, will contain all the characters compositions. For each speaking character detected in your screenplay, a composition will be created.

The second folder, **Locations**, will hold all your locations compositions. For each location (including Interior and Exterior variations), a composition will be created.

The third folder, **Scenes**, is where all your scenes compositions will be stored. For each scenes in your screenplay, we will create a composition. Inside the scenes compositions you will find, by default, the characters compositions (if your scene features talking characters), and its location composition.

Depending on the settings, you will have more or less folders.



If you open the rough cut composition, you will notice several things:

- The layers overlap
- The layers have different colors
- The layers have a marker

Because we are creating a rough cut, we need to have room to adjust the cuts / transitions. By default, a 1 second margin is added before the start and after the end of the scene. All the scene timed content is shifted to reflect this. You can change this behavior in the [Timing Settings](#).

By default, all rough cut layers are colored depending on their Time Of Day (TOD) value. When no TOD is available, the standard comp layer label is used (sandstone). You can change this behavior in the [Rough Cut Settings](#).

The marker gives you the number of speaking characters in the scene. You can disable them in the [Rough Cut Settings](#).

■ Creating individual Scene Compositions

When you create a rough cut, the compositions for all the scenes in the screenplay are created on the fly. But maybe you don't want to create a rough cut, but are only interested in creating the comps for a handful of scenes.

With Story Boarding 1.5 you can do that. Just double-click on any scene in the scene list.

#	Scene Header	Length	Characters
00001	INT. WARNING CARD	00:00:25	0
00002	INT. WARNING CARD	00:00:13	0
00003	EXT. NORTH POLE - DAY	00:00:36	1
00004	INT. DAVID'S LIVING ROOM - DAY	00:00:48	2
00005	INT. DAVID'S LIVING ROOM - DAY	00:00:30	2
00006	INT. DAVID'S LIVING ROOM - DAY	00:00:16	2

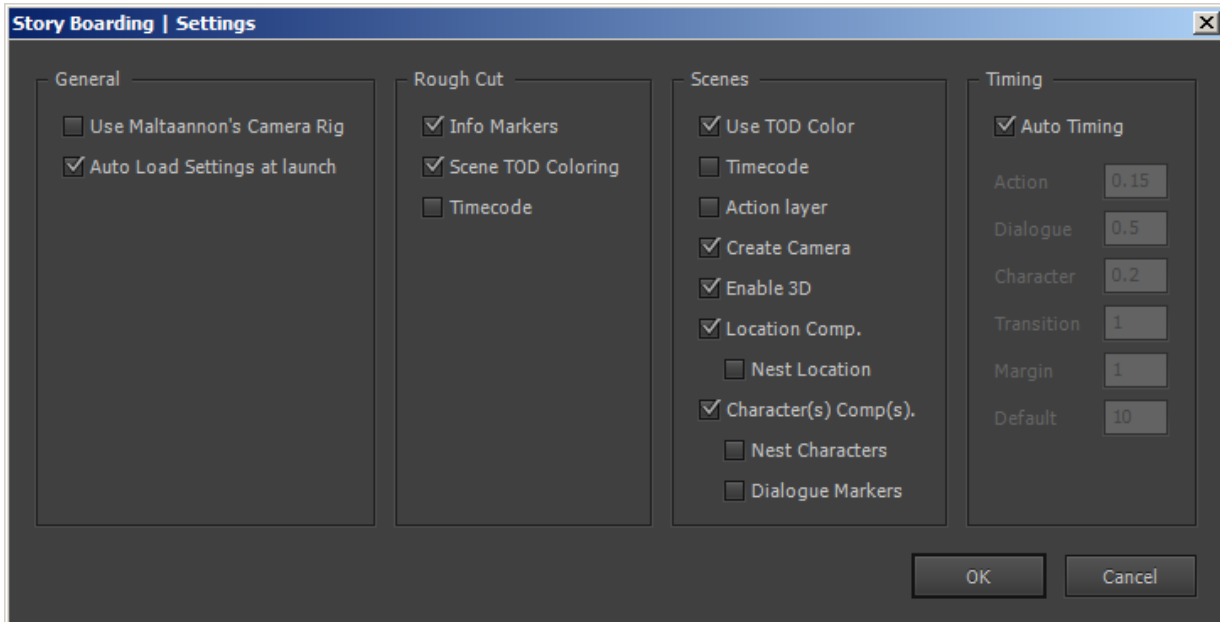
Exactly like when you create a rough cut (see [Creating a Rough Cut](#)), Story Boarding will create the **Characters**, **Locations** and **Scenes** folder, along with respective compositions (if needed). You can of course change this behavior in the [Scene Settings](#).

If you create several scenes with common locations or characters, they will share the same location and character compositions (same behavior as rough cut).

If you decide later on to create a rough cut, your already existing scenes will be used.

Settings

One major new feature of Story Boarding v1.5 is its full featured Settings Panel. Most of Story Boarding's features can be adjusted here.



• General Settings

The General Settings are the ones used to drive global properties of Story Boarding.

- Use Maltaannon's Camera Rig (default: disabled): If you own Maltys Simple camera Rig, you can enable this option to replace the standard camera used (when Create Camera in [Scene Settings](#) is enabled) by Maltaannon's powerful camera rig. It slows down a bit the comp creation process, but it's totally worth it. You can check it out on its [official page here](#).
- Auto Load Settings at launch (default: enabled): By default Story Boarding will load your last settings. If you always want to start with the default values, uncheck this option.

• Rough Cut Settings

- Info Markers (default: enabled): Will add a marker on every scene layer inside the rough cut composition. The marker shows the number of talking characters inside the scene.
- Scene TOD Coloring (default: enabled): The scene layers will be colored (using layer label) depending on their Time Of Day (TOD) value. Yellow for **DAY**, blue for **NIGHT** and so on. If you turn this option off but keep the **Use TOD Color** from

the [Scene Settings](#), the layers will still be colored because by default, After Effects attributes to any layer its source label (in this case the scene composition label).

- Timecode (default: disabled): Will create a timecode for your rough cut in the lower left corner of the composition. The timecode will use the composition current timing format (HH:MM:SS:FF by default).

• Scene Settings

- Use TOD Color (default: enabled): This parameter will change the default label color for the composition depending on the Time Of Day value of the scene. Yellow for **DAY**, blue for **NIGHT** and so on. If the scene doesn't have a TOD value, it will use After Effects's default composition label (Sandstone).
- Timecode (default: disabled): This parameter will add a timecode in the bottom right corner of the composition. You can use it with the **Timecode** option in the [Rough Cut Settings](#) to display both timecodes. The scene timecode also features the scene number.
- Action Layer (default: disabled): When enabled, a null layer named Action will be added on top of the composition layer stack with markers synched to the action paragraphs of your scene. The marker is set to the duration of the action paragraph and have its content in the comment section.
- Create Camera (default: enabled): Creates a camera in the scene composition, ready to be animated. You can use the **Maltaannon's Camera Rig** option in the [General Settings](#) to have the script use the Simple Camera Rig instead of the default camera. In order to use this option, you must have purchased the script. More information [here](#).
- Enable 3D (default: enabled): Enables the 3D switch on the location and character(s) compositions in the scene. Perfect to jump start the animatic.
- Location Comp. (default: enabled): Adds the location composition inside the scene comp. If disabled, the location composition won't be created nor added.
 - Nest Location (default: disabled): If you need a unique location composition for each scene in which the same location is used, this is the option you want to enable. It will create a global location comp and then insert it in a scene location precomp. That way you can still use the power of the location composition(drag anything inside and it will appear inside every scene using this location) and still have a separate composition per scene basis if you need to adjust it.
- Character(s) Comp(s). (default: enabled): Adds the character(s) composition(s) for your scene characters. When disabled, the character compositions won't be created, nor added.
 - Nest Characters (default: disabled): Same as the option above. Perfect if you need to adjust your character per scene basis. You will still benefit from the global character comp, and enjoy the ease of adding props to it in every scenes. Perfect if your characters often changes wardrobes for example.

- Dialogue Markers (default: disabled): When enabled, markers will be added for every line of dialogue your character(s) have during the scene.

• Timing Settings

- Auto Timing (default: enabled) When enabled, the script will use the default timing values to estimate the length of each scenes. It will use the default values indicated below.
- Action (default: 0.15): Increment length for each word in action paragraph. By default it will add 0.15 seconds to the scene length for each word of any action paragraph found in the scene.
- Dialogue (default: 0.5): Increment length for each word in dialogue paragraph. By default it will add 0.5 seconds to the scene length for each dialogue word of any dialogues paragraph found in the scene.
- Character (default: 0.2): Increment length for each speaking character found in the scene. By default it will add 0.2 seconds to the scene length for each speaking character found in the scene.
- Transition (default: 1): Transition duration, used for fades and cross-fades. By default it will add 1 second to the scene for each transition found in the scene.
- Margin (default: 1): Safety margin duration. By default 1 second will be added before the start and after the end of the scene when creating the composition to have room for cut timing adjustments.
- Default (default: 10): Scene duration when no timing is found in Adobe Story screenplay. By default, every scene will be 10 seconds if no timing information is found inside an Adobe Story screenplay. Don't forget to enable scene timing in Adobe Story to avoid that.

■ Interaction with Third Party Scripts

Because the After Effects script community is rich and alive, Story Boarding is inclined to add some compatibility and cross-functionality with some of them.

• Zorro The Layer Tagger

When creating its compositions and layers, Story Boarding is using the tagging system used by [Zorro](#) to quickly create groups. Zorro also use the layer labels, and using the TOD coloring in both [Scene Settings](#) and [Rough Cut Settings](#) also enhance the way both scripts works together.

• Malt: Simple camera Rig

[Malt Simple Camera Rig](#) is the perfect tool to handle and animate cameras with ease! You can replace the default camera used when the **Create Camera** option is enabled ([Scene Settings](#)) with Malt's rig by enabling the **Maltaannon Camera Rig** option in [General Settings](#).

■ Final Draft & Adobe Story subtitles

Final Draft doesn't include timing information inside its fdx export format. That's why Story Boarding will have to figure out the scene timing. We are using default timing values for each type of paragraph found in a scene, such as Action or Dialogue. Because the timing is calculated on the fly, Story Boarding have the ability to know the timing details of every sub part of your scene.

This is not the case with Adobe Story. If you export an Adobe Story screenplay without timing indication, Story Boarding won't be able to figure out the timing of your scenes and will use the default duration specified in the [Timing Settings](#).

If you are an Adobe Story user, we recommend you to export to the Final Draft format instead of Adobe Story format, as we are able to extract more detailed informations from a Final Draft screenplay.

If you're importing a Final Draft format screenplay, you can set in the [Timing Settings](#) dialogue markers for every line a character have, with its duration and its text. This option is disabled by default.

You can also enable the creation of a null layer named Action, featuring Markers for each action paragraph in your scene. The Markers are also properly timed, to help improve your efficiency. learn more about it in the [Timing Settings](#).

Troubleshooting / FAQ

All my scenes have the same duration.

Make sure you activated the timing option on your screenplay in Adobe Story in View > Scene Duration > Cum. Running Time menu.

If this option is not set, the script will assume a default duration of 10 seconds for each scenes as set in the [Timing Settings](#).

Only 10 scenes gets imported.

Only the trial version of the script is limited to 10 scenes. Make sure you have properly licenced the script or that your screenplay have more than 10 scenes in it.

If you need troubleshooting, [Contact](#) us.

My transitions or time of day indications are not properly set.

If you are using Adobe Story in another language than english, you'll have to change the time of day indicators and transitions back to english as only english is supported right now.

Can I import screenplays exported from <insert your software here>?

Probably. Check if your favorite scriptwriting program can export to Final Draft *.fdx file format. Most do, so give it a shot.

You can of course make a feature request or add your voice to one in the comment section of the script on aescrpts.com (see [Contact](#) for more information).

*I exported my screenplay in *.astx and *.fdx and after importing both versions, the timings are not the same.*

Adobe Story stores it's own estimated duration inside it's *.astx file, so the script can read it directly. There are no temporal informations in Final Draft's *.fdx format so the script have to calculate them (see [Final Draft & Adobe Story subtitles](#) for more details).

How is calculated a scene duration when importing a Final Draft Screenplay?

Each action word is worth 0.15s, dialogue word 0.5s. 0.2s is added for each character and fade transitions are worth 1s. You can change these default values in the [Timing Settings](#).

I changed the settings, but after quitting and relaunching the script, they are gone.

The settings are saved in After Effects preference file. Make sure that the **Auto Load settings at Launch** option is enabled in the [General Settings](#). And make sure that your

AE pref file is not corrupted.

Can I change the timing information for Final Draft import?

Yes you can, see the [Timing Settings](#) section above.

I enabled Maltaannon's camera rig but it asks me for a file

You need to have Maltys: Simple Camera Rig in order to use this option. If you already have purchased it, you need to locate the file on your computer to allow Story Boarding to communicate with it. If you haven't purchased it yet, [you can do so here](#).

I already created some scene compositions, will they get erased if I create a rough cut?

Story Boarding will never erase your content. If you've used the scene list to automatically create your scene, Story Boarding will remember that and include your composition in the rough cut. If not, it will create a new composition, and you'll be able to replace it with yours.

Can I configure the default Master Comp Story Boarding is using when creating its compositions?

Story Boarding will use the selected comp in the dropdown menu when creating a scene composition or a rough cut. If nothing is selected, it will use an internal default setting of 1920x1080 @24fps. If you want to use a specific resolution, aspect ratio and/or framerate, just create a composition and select it in the dropdown menu. If your composition is not listed in the dropdown menu, hit the R button to refresh the list.

I'm on a Mac and can't open the script when using script>run script file.

Sometimes, on Mac OS, After Effects will only allow *.jsx files to be used using the file > script > run script file command. You can change the script extension from StoryBoarding_v1.5.jsxbin to StoryBoarding_v1.5.jsx, or you can drag & drop (in After Effects CC 12.2) your script on the project panel to open it.

Version History

- v1.5
 - Added: New dockable interface
 - Added: auto creation of Master Comp
 - Added: Settings Panel
 - Added: Single Scene composition creation
 - Added: Screenplay preview Panel
 - Removed: External XML settings (autosave in AE pref file)
 - Enhanced: Behind the scene codework
 - Fixed: Several minor bugs
- v1.3
 - Added: Timed action on markers (Final Draft Only)
 - Added: Per scene Character & location compositions (via xml settings)
 - Added: Default timing values modification (via xml settings)
 - Added: External Settings in XML
 - Fixed: Duplicated characters with (con't) in special cases
 - Fixed: <text> tags in Final Draft paragraphes
- v1.2
 - Added: Timed dialogues on markers (Final Draft Only)
 - Fixed: Character encoding bugs
- v1.1
 - Added: Final Draft Import
 - Fixed: Minor *.astx interpretation bugs
- v1.0
 - Initial release

Contact

For everything related to licencing you should [contact aescrpts](#) and open a ticket there.

For every other questions or requests, the best way is to add a comment on [Story Boarding's aescrpts forum](#).

If you want something more private, you can [contact me here](#) or through [Twitter @Yenaphe](#).

To know more about the project behind these scripts, be sure to check [The Mythomen Movie Project \(mytho.mn\)](#)

I speak french and english, so select your language of choice ;)