

# MAKING YOUR OWN WEB ANIME

A basic overview of what goes into making an animated series  
for the web with a small team or as a solo endeavor.

## **Introduction**

So you want to make your own animated series, cartoon or “anime”. You’ve got some ideas you want to share with the world, that’s great! But how do you do that? While there’s no easy or universal answer, this guide will serve as a basic overview of what worked for me. It’ll go over the basics of organization, production flow, when to cast Voice Actors and how to work with them. Software and hardware will be touched upon briefly, the main purpose of this guide is to give some insight on just how much work goes into an ambitious project like this. Common pitfalls will be revealed so you may avoid them in the future, but to emphasize this is not the only way of pulling off something like this. This is mainly for the small creators, passion projects and lower budget indie works. The workflow will always vary dependent on the scope and budget of the project.

## **About Me**

What do I know? A brief introduction makes sense. My name is Adam Tilford and I’m a small indie creator. I’m a writer who dove into animation and taught himself how to make this sort of thing work. “Self-taught”, but the truth is I’ve had a lot of teachers along the way. Friends that work in the animation industry have helped shape my understanding of animation as a whole. I produce an animated web series called Shattered Heaven.

A mech sci-fi drama based off my novel of the same name. The project dates back to late 2007/early 2008 and has had a few forms over the last decade. Most notably in the form of 2 different series, the first one in 2007 that went to around 2010 and had 4 episodes. The second and current iteration, debuted in 2013, its first season ended in 2016 consisting of 6 episodes and 4 side episodes. The second season recently debuted in May of 2019. I’ve been doing this for over a decade now, and through this time I’ve seen many people start animated series, some succeeded, some failed, while others boasted about their plans but never got started. I’ll never proclaim to be an industry level animator, it’s never been my goal. I just enjoy the medium for storytelling. But at the very least, I have the experience to tell you what does and doesn’t work, the mentality you have to develop and the pitfalls to avoid.

If interested in knowing more about me or my project, you can follow me below:

<https://twitter.com/christilford> | <https://www.youtube.com/AdamTilford>

## **Developing your idea**

Before you can truly dive into an animated project, or any project for that matter, you have to establish your idea. The story you want to tell, the characters that will live it and ultimately where it’ll end. These sort of projects aren’t going to be a “make it up as you go” scenario. I mean, you could do that, but you’ll most likely bomb and quit before you get too far.

A lot of people think their idea will be the next “big thing”, but most can’t tell the difference between being in love with an idea or being in love with the idea of telling a story. Are you infatuated with the “idea” of an animated series, of becoming popular and a pseudo e-celeb? Or, do you just have an internal urge to entertain others? You really need to figure this out early on because it does make a huge difference. People who are simply in love with the idea of this don’t necessarily plan things out proper. They rush in way too soon, before they have any of the necessary floor plans in place. They want to get out there as soon as possible to spread the word about their “next big thing”. I’ll be blunt, no one takes you seriously. Red flags exist in the online indie world and seeing people rush and talk big about their project with zero material to show for it is a huge one. This goes especially for voice actors. When impatient and ambitious creators start throwing up casting calls for their “anime” without having material to show, animators, concept art etc, most voice actors will ignore the call because honestly, the project is never getting off the ground. It reeks of both desperation and ignorance. Ignorance towards not only how a respectable workflow is established, but ignorance towards your own limits.

Limits are extremely important to be aware of. It’s not a negative thing either, knowing your limits helps you to create a consistent workflow that won’t leave you burned out. So if you have an idea for an animated series but you’re not an artist/animator, you should first acknowledge that you need to find one before you even dream about making your project public. To the artists out there, even if you do not know how to animate, you can LEARN. This is a challenge to any artistically gifted individual who dreams of making an animated series. If you can’t find any animators out there that are interested in working on your project (for free because it’s a safe assumption the people reading this do not have a budget), then challenge yourself to do it. Learn it, make your dream a reality. If you’re truly passionate about this story of yours, you’ll make it happen.

The key to that goes back to knowing your limits. Temper your expectations and don’t think you need to come out the gate with anime studio quality. It’s simply not realistic and if you focus on that, you’ll never get off the ground. Take some smaller ideas to practice animation with, don’t immediately dive into your 25 episode, 3 OVAs and multiple seasons anime project. Make a 2 minute short to test the waters of animation. This not only helps you practice, it may also help you find other likeminded animators and maybe even some voice actors.

The main takeaway here is to have realistic ambitions when you start out. You need to learn how to walk before you can run. When you run without the basics, you’re going to fall hard and injure yourself. A lot of people get defensive when they’re told that their multiple season anime that’ll air on TV Tokyo and Toonami is unrealistic. Most just then fade into obscurity never to show back up again. It’s a harsh truth, but you need to understand this from the start. If you have zero experience as a content creator, animator, etc, then how can you possibly expect to run a project of that magnitude? You can’t.

Developing your idea for your project starts with understanding the scope of your limits, what you currently have available to you in terms of staff, software, and education. Having your story properly planned out, and your characters established. This is something that will take a while to



get down, but before you even dream of going forward with the project as an animation, you need to have this solidified. Your story doesn't need to be fully written out or scripted, but you do need a basic outline of the journey that is going to unfold.

### **I'm an artist but I can't animate**

If you're truly passionate about this, you'll learn. I had no experience as an animator and my art skills were trash. But I still threw myself into Flash (Animate) to learn. It was rough, the quality was trash, but it was the first step in a journey. You learn so much by just taking that first step. No one is good at the start, you learn by doing. You study other animators, their work, study shows, study life and how people move. This means you'll have to put the full scope of your animation on hold while you learn, but this is the way to do it. You'll have full control of your project, you won't have to worry about budgets, paying animators, or waiting for them to meet deadlines. You control the flow of your project, the project becomes your identity and as such, you transform into a stronger artist and person from it. But the main thing is you have to get rid of any instant gratification mentalities. You need to know that this is a marathon, not a sprint. If you can focus on that and not on e-fame, then you'll have a chance at making this work.

### **I'm not an artist, I'm just a writer**

This bit is trickier. You can't really take on the burden of visual creation yourself. There's no set answer as to where you can find animators to work on your project, especially if there's no budget to begin with. You can visit sites like Newgrounds.com and try engaging on their forums, but the harsh reality is, it's extremely difficult to find an animator to work on your dream. If there's no pay involved, most animators won't consider it, and even if there is pay involved, is it enough? I've been approached with \$50 to animate a pilot of an "anime". I turn them down immediately. Animation is excruciatingly painful and time consuming. You can read about "crunch" online and how damaging it is to animators, how little they get paid for the amount of work they do. Because of this, finding an animator to work on your project is difficult. I won't say it's impossible, because there are some newer animators out there that are looking for a symbiotic relationship. They want to grow their abilities but don't have anything specific that'll challenge them. These unicorns exist, but I don't have any true good advice on how to find them. The only suggestion I have is to find art communities and network within them.

### **But how do I network?**

The simple answer is be humble, respectful and kind. Networking isn't about spamming or bombarding people until they answer you. You are never entitled to anyone's time, you need to understand that first before you can even consider networking. Once you do, it's a matter of natural interactions. It's not instant, it's never instant. Be patient. You find like minded individuals and you start talking in the same Discord server, channels, forums, etc. People will react

accordingly when they find someone that shares their interests. Sub discussions may occur, you might go “hey, that person in that multi-person exchange seems cool, I’m going to go follow them”, if they feel the same, they may follow you and from there a natural connection is created. Never, and I mean never, spam your project or ideas. Don’t project idea vomit at someone that isn’t interested. Let people ask you for more information on your project after you mention you have one. A quick, guaranteed turn-off to any creative person is when someone else solicits their project without being asked. We get it, your project is super, special, and awesome to you, but that might not be the case for everyone else. The blunt reality is no one cares. At least, not at first. You can mention that you’re trying to do something and if anyone is interested, they’ll ask for more. When they do, then you’ve gotten the “okay” to talk. It’s like you’re a vampire, you can’t enter someone’s home until you’re invited in. The same concept applies here, wait to be invited to discuss your project.

There is no single answer to “networking”. Taking classes on any creative skill, interacting in communities, etc are all forms of natural networking. The only universal trick to it is to avoid being overbearing, respect people’s personal spaces and accept that no one owes you their time.

### **I did all those things but I still can’t find an animator!**

This is a harsh pill to swallow, but if you can’t find anyone to animate your project, then it’s time to shift your project to something YOU can do on your own. I know it can be disheartening to hear, but maybe your project isn’t meant to be animated at this moment in time. But that doesn’t mean it’s the end! There are other methods of getting your story out there! If your passion is truly just telling your story, then you’ll be able to endure the medium shift.

**Write a book:** The easiest answer is this. It’s your story, you know what it’s supposed to be, so write it as a book! You won’t have to worry about finding artists to do anything, no one else to answer to but yourself! You can then even try to find a literary agent and get published, or after proper editing, maybe self-publish. If your main goal is to get that story that’s been festering in your head, then this is an excellent way to do it! Plus, you can always return to the idea of animating it later on. If anything, you’ll have a much stronger grasp on your story and you may have created an audience and a network through the book version of your story!

**Make an Audio Drama:** Audio dramas/podcasts are coming back in full force! This is sort of a middle ground answer. You get to work with actors who will bring your characters to life, but you won’t have to deal with the strain of working with animators. With this medium you get to work strictly with audio to bring your story to life. Much like with a book, you can always return to the idea of animating later. Even better, you’ll have the audio already mixed! People animate to mixdown tracks of scenes.

## **Conclusion**

That's a lot to take in and think about. When it comes to developing your ideas there's so many ways it can go. But the main takeaway from this is to truly understand your idea, the scope of its potential, your limits, the resources available to you at this time, and most importantly, why are you doing this. What is your reason for wanting to go down this path. It's not always the most fun question to ask yourself, but it's easily the most important. There's a lot of mental battles ahead when it comes to creating an animated series, so if you're not sincerely grounded in a realistic drive then you're going to have a difficult time.

Are you doing this because there's an urge within you, a fire and passion about storytelling that you need to itch?

Or

Are you doing this because you want to become popular, e-famous, and successful as a social media influencer?

Make sure you answer these questions before you even consider to move forward.

## **Production**

The very first thing you need to establish is your "scope". How big your project is going to be, how long episodes will be, the type of quality you want to achieve. Is it going to be a motion comic sort of deal, will it be 2D traditional style animation, or will it be 3D? This goes back to knowing your realistic limitations. Are you choosing to animate the project on your own? Were you successful in finding animators, and if you were, are they being paid a small budget or are they doing it for free? These are all things you seriously have to consider before stepping foot into the production stage.

### **You are not competing with professional anime studios**

Some people will suggest that you are. That you need to establish why people should watch your show instead of watching one professionally made. The fact is, that's a trash mentality. It's not like people are being threatened to choose one over the other. There's plenty of room for the existence of professional studio projects and small indie ones. But you do need to provide incentive for why people will want to watch your show. That lies more on you than it does the professional studios. There's no universal answer here, it can be good art, it can be a great story and characters, or people might just like you and want to see how you grow. There's a lot of reasons why people will watch your show.

### **My animation isn't as good as "insert anime"**

No reasonable person expects it to be. Animation projects like this are meant to be done with a team that has funded a budget. Doing it as a small indie, whether as a solo act or just a few people means you're not expected to match the bigger, professional studios. So don't beat

yourself up over that. This said, there will be people that will suggest your quality isn't good or it's not a real "anime", the best advice is to simply ignore those trolls and keep doing what you love. Keep striving to improve.

### **The reality of original web series production**

The first thing you need to understand is that it's hard. It's hard not only to produce, but to get the attention of an audience. Youtube and social media as a whole constantly adjust their algorithms, which makes it extremely difficult to be found. People tend to hesitate giving something that isn't mainstream and new, attention or even a chance. Most may see something and just ignore it because they don't know what it is off the bat. Added to this is the fact that we live in a time where everyone wants instant gratification and enjoys a quick pace to their lives. As such, seeing an unfamiliar project with a time stamp of say, 23 minutes is daunting. They're likely to not even watch it when they can watch something that's only 2 minutes. There's less of a risk to their time.

Now, I personally think this is stupid, but that's just how things are now. Even if they might be interested, seeing a 23 minute long video of an animation will most likely end up with them putting it aside to watch later, if they even remember.

This sucks, I'll be clear. If you're a storyteller and you want to create this epic project, you don't even want to consider shortening your episodes. But if you want to have a chance out there, then you're going to have to. It doesn't say anything about you as a creator, it's just the current social media landscape. 15 minutes might be okay but for a new project with nothing established, even that might be too long. 10 minutes might be a better sweet spot when starting out.

Keep in mind, the longer the episode, the less likely it'll get spread around the internet.

### **People will be mean**

If you don't know about Misty Chronexia (he's an anituber), then I'll make this brief. He is an anituber that wrote a novel called "Chronexia and the Eight Seals". Eventually he too had the idea to make an anime. He reached out to an indie animation studio and contracted them to make his anime. When the first episode came out, it was met with mixed reviews. The one thing that was almost consistently guaranteed was -

*"This isn't anime, it's nowhere near as good as Naruto's animation".*

Were these comments fair? No, not in the slightest. The fact is the studio animating it were new and small, this was a learning experience for them. Misty had no experience producing a project of this magnitude. While a lot of people understood this, many anime fans didn't or even if they did, just didn't care. The reception wasn't what he ultimately wanted and after the 2nd episode teaser was released, he cancelled the project. I don't know him personally so I can only assume

why he cancelled it. Maybe his life was getting too busy, or maybe he had a weird perception of how his anime was going to be received. It's entirely possible that he wanted/expected his show to blow up and become a hit and when it didn't, he lost the desire to bother with it.

This goes back to what I said earlier about knowing why you're doing this. If you're really passionate about telling your story, then you'll keep at it. Your ambition and humble creativity will resonate with the right people. But if you're solely doing this for e-fame, chances are you won't be able to survive either the lack of attention or the mean comments from people on the internet. Personally, I was really excited to see him try to make his novel an animated series. I hope he returns to it one day.

### **Which Animation medium is better?**

This entirely depends on who is animating your project. 2D digital/traditional is by default, a lot more involved and exhausting. I don't have 3D experience so I can't speak to it, but 3D animation and puppeteering might be an easier route to take. Ideally you're going to figure out what makes sense based on your scenario and the realistic scope of your project. If you look at Chris Niosi/Kirbopher and TOME for a second, you'll understand the balance of efficiency based on your availability.

TOME was a flash based animated web series that focused on tweens, pre-rendered symbols that could be inserted and reused when needed. There were moments of 2D traditional frame by frame action for specific emotional or action scenes, but the majority of the show utilized assets that could be reused when needed. This method is PERFECT for a web animated series with a small team or even a solo animator. One of the biggest things with content for the web is consistency and keeping your audience engaged. The key to this is making your production life easier. You can always craft an engaging story and characters without using the highest quality of art and animation. With great sound design and quality VO performances, your audience can still engage actively with your project.

I don't consider RWBY or anything produced by Rooster Teeth as an applicable example of small indie production. At the end of it, RT have a full staff and animation team that also suffered through major "crunch". A lot of times I see comments comparing animated web projects to RWBY or other RT productions simply because they think RT started small or is primarily a small studio that it's comparable, but it's not. RT is ultimately owned by Warner and they do have a full production staff. Rooster Teeth is not comparable to small, indie web teams. They just aren't.

In terms of which animation medium is "better", it's entirely subjective and dependent on your individual scenario. Ultimately you need to be realistic when it comes to choosing what route you're going to take.

Sometimes the most realistic route based on the ability of either yourself as the animator or your small team is a compromise and not what you may have originally intended. The goal of your production should always be getting the story out there and scratching that itch. Just because



you may have to compromise your production now doesn't mean it won't end up how you originally envisioned.

It's important to remember that you can always grow and improve your work as you go. Starting simple is the best way to start. You have to put aside your stubbornness and not think of it as a failure. You're not failing if you envisioned a full 2D anime but start out doing simple motion tween movements in the beginning.

Success is when you put plan to practice and you actually create something tangible. Success is not e-fame, it is not millions of views, success is simply completing what you set out to do.

### **But I want it to be a perfectly artistic and cinematic!**

Good for you! Dream big! Now that you're awake from that dream, reign that shit in. You are most likely a solo act or a really small team with a tiny budget or maybe no budget at all. Do you know how long that'll take? A year maybe and that might be for a minute of animation. Unless you have a fully budgeted animation team behind you, temper those expectations and come back to reality. The success of your web series is not based on how artistically cinematic you are, it's based on how good your story is and how consistent you are at putting out content.

If you wanted to do a short one off then sure, go nuts. But that's not what this article is about or who it's targeted to. If you're reading this then you want to do the full "anime", you want to have an episodic epic story told, and in that case, you need to make some sacrifices. The people that go all in for this sort of artistically cinematic style are the people that have short content released with years in between them. Do you know what happens in a year on the internet? Changes. So many changes. Social media platforms adjust their algorithms, their monetization, they may go under. Your audience might even forget you exist and if you randomly show up again after maybe 2 years to make that cinematic 2 minute piece of work, they might not even get a notification that you still exist.

Consistent engagement with your audience is key for an animated web series. This isn't to say you won't get more artistic or cinematic as you go. You will, you will naturally improve with each release. Each time during production you'll take some new risks, experiment with new ideas, but this way your core audience remains engaged. Then when you look back at your first episode you'll be amazed at your growth, and so will your audience.

Don't try to be perfect out the gate. Don't ever try to be perfect, it won't happen. Just focus on completing the project.

### **Staffing/Team**

With these basic mentalities out of the way, let's go over what a basic team composition might entail.

**Creator/Project Lead:** You're the person that started it all! You control the direction of the story and how the production will flow. Depending on the situation, you may end up wearing multiple hats. You may end up being the animator, editor, mixer etc. It ultimately depends on if you have a budget to pay people or if you found people interested enough in your idea that they wanted to jump on board to get some experience and make something great!.

**Artist/Animator:** Not all animators are artists, but for the smaller projects, it's likely that this will be a combined role. The artist will be the one controlling the visual flow of the project. From character designs to overall atmosphere. As an animator, they're the ones that will control the visual pacing and they'll let you know what their limitations are. You're always going to want to work within their comfort zone. To avoid crunch, keep it simplistic and attainable. Keep in mind these roles usually have multiple members, so if it's solo or maybe 2 at the most, you can't treat or expect them to function the same way a fully budgeted studio would.

**Writer/Editor:** Again, if you as the project lead aren't doing this, you want someone to be able to reign in your insane ideas. As the project lead, chances are you're too close to the story to see the flaws. Having someone else to edit your work will be huge in creating a flowing story.

**Audio Engineer:** This is the person that will deal with the audio from voice actors as well as sound design (sfx) for the show. Ideally you'll want to have someone with experience, but that may not always be the case. So you may end up having to learn enough to be moderately competent in the beginning.

**Composers:** They make the music. Now this is going to be the rarest unicorn in all the land. There are some that do this for experience and for free, but they're truly the last unicorn. You can always find royalty free music online if needed.

**Voice Actors:** They're technically not part of your "Team", more like contractors that are either giving you their time for free or for pay. Let's segue into Voice Actors for a second, there's a lot to unpack here.

## **Working with Voice Actors!**

This is one of the biggest areas that gets problematic with creators. Most on average do not understand the basic etiquette when it comes to working with VA/VOs. From unrealistic deadlines and turnarounds to expectations of a free marketing team, VAs get treated rather poorly when it comes to the inexperienced creator. It's usually from a place of ignorance than a place of pure entitled malice, not to say that doesn't happen, but we're going to go with the benefit of the doubt here.

### **First and foremost, when do I look for voice actors?**

When you have your idea developed, your project scope established and a team in place. A lot of times I see casting calls for "Ideas" not projects.

## What's the difference between an "Idea" and a "Project"?

An idea is simply that, an idea. There's no established team, no proof of concept, no example of previous completed work. Basically, there's no evidence to prove that your "project" will ever become a reality. When voice actors see things like this, they usually will ignore not just the casting call but your name as a creator in the future. When a casting call is based around an "idea" instead of a tangible project, the red flags sound off.

A project is the opposite of that. You have an established team, your casting call is laid out in a way that shows proof of concept, character designs, maybe an animatic that's rough, something that tells the world you are a serious creator. Voice actors don't want to waste their time putting in effort for something that isn't going to become a reality. Whenever a casting call is posted and there's nothing to suggest the project is organized, they ignore it and you start to build a bad reputation.

## So I shouldn't post a casting call until I have a team in place?

Correct. Posting before that will create a negative stigma about you and your project.

## Where do I post a casting call?

I personally recommend the Voice Acting Club. It is run by Kira Buckland, an industry VO vet and the community there is extremely helpful.

<http://voiceactingclub.com/> | Discord - <https://discord.gg/>

## What exactly is a casting call anyway?

A casting call is exactly what it sounds like- you're putting out a call for casting your characters.

Here's what it is not

Ex:

*Creator enters the server*

**Creator:** *Hi, I'm making an anime and need voice actors, DM me if you're interested.*

*The server ignores the creator and goes on about their day talking about cats.*

A casting call needs to be a well thought out post that properly introduces who you are, what your project is, the characters you're looking to cast and scripted lines with directions for voice actors to read.

Ex:

*[Unpaid Casting Call- Shattered Heaven]*

*My name is Adam and I am a writer and animator. I make an animated web series called Shattered Heaven. It's about mechs and shit.*

*Here are some examples of the characters and the project:*

*Here are the characters available:*

*Character A*

*About: They like and do things.*

*Voice Type: Looking for a low, raspy voice.*

*Lines:*

- 1) I sure do like those things! [ Sound energetic and happy!]*
- 2) Man, if only you also like those things. I am sad. [Emphasize how sad and heartbroken you are]*
- 3) You mean person, you stole the things I liked. I'll never forgive you! [Be angry and intimidating]*

*Format: Mp3 format, raw [no edits or noise removal]. Send all lines in a single Mp3. No more than 3 takes.*

*Send to: adam@lomasassybitch. Com*

*Deadline: 7/14/2019*

This is a generic example that serves its purpose. You're clear and concise about who you are, what your project is and the characters you're trying to cast. You also show that this is a real project and not some "idea".

With the VAC specifically, there is a forum where you can post this casting call.

### **Deadlines and why they're important**

There is a nasty habit of people casting before the deadline has come. Don't ever do this. I know it can be tempting to cast the first good actor you hear. Especially if you have no experience as a creator, it's going to be something special to hear someone bring your character to life. Unfortunately because you're inexperienced, you may just want to grab the first person you hear. They may not always be the best fit for the character.

The point of posting a deadline and sticking to it is not only to give actors the chance to discover your project and time to record an audition, but it also is a test to show people that you can be

organized and stick to what you put down on paper. A casting call is more than simply looking for actors, it's a looking glass into how organized you are as a lead on a project.

### **Do I have to pay voice actors?**

While in an ideal world everyone gets paid, the point of the internet community is to establish networks and growth. The reality is not everyone is going to have a budget where payment is available. That's okay! If your project is a non-profit passion project, you will not be judged as anything negative.

You do have to be completely transparent about if there is pay or not. As long as you are upfront that this is not a paying job then it falls onto the voice actor to choose whether they want to devote time to audition or not. While you might not grab some professional voice actors this way, there are always tons of actors who are looking to cultivate some experience. Plus if your project's casting call is posted in a way that is organized as well as containing appealing content, you may catch the eye of a professional willing to audition for you.

### **I have some money but that's for the animators, is that okay?**

No. Here's where things can get tricky and problematic for VOs. This is where the concept of VOs being abused or taken for granted comes from. Some projects do have a tendency to pay the animators, writers, audio engineers, etc but then skimp on paying the VOs. Some consider VOs replaceable commodities that aren't in the same priority/worth boat as the actual team.

The simple, important answer- If you have money to pay for your team, then you better be paying your voice actors.

### **Okay but I have a really small budget, I can't afford industry rates.**

Again, this is fine. If you are upfront about your budget and you're willing to pay your VOs, they will then be willing to work with you. The issue is never about the amount VOs receive, it's about if they're treated with common respect. If they know you're small and struggling, most will help you come up with a fair price. Some may not want to and may not take the project, and that's okay too! Be transparent and respectful and you'll always come out on top.

The VAC has put together a basic Indie Rate Guide for VOs. I suggest you read up on it here- <http://voiceactingclub.com/rates/>

Now that doesn't mean that's what you're expected to pay, it's just to give VOs an idea of what may be fair in the indie market. The truth is that every project is different. So most pay rates will be determined on a project to project basis.

If you are not making money off your project, not paying anyone else and are upfront at the beginning then you will be fine.

### **I'll pay you with exposure and/or future monetary gain!**

I'm not going to make an exposure joke. Exposure as compensation is something that should never be offered. Offering future monetary payments in the form of ad revenue or royalties is also a no go. If you're going to try to be a paid project, pay for the work now or stick to keeping it as an unpaid project. Never off future pay that isn't guaranteed.

### **I have my cast, when do I expect to get my lines?**

First, you need to understand that everyone has a life they need to schedule around. It is not fair to give your actors lines and then demand them back the next day. You need to respectfully talk with them and find out what is workable with them. Usually a few weeks is a good call.

### **I gave them a deadline and still no lines, now what?**

Politely email them asking for an update. As long as you're polite with them, you are fine. It is recommended to give a polite reminder about a deadline a few days before it arrives. Regardless of if the project is paid or not, they made a commitment to your project. It is not unfair for you to check in.

### **They're not responding to my messages and I see them posting!**

If they are not responding to you and are essentially ignoring you then you can send a polite and respectful email asking them for an update, otherwise you're going to have to recast. If they do not respond to that email, then you are free to recast. It's unfortunate, but these things do happen sometimes. In the end, you have to remain respectful and move on.

### **My actors don't want to market my project!**

Here's a harsh truth, and this is why I refer to actors as "contractors" and not part of the "team". A lot of times actors are just trying to book roles for experience and may not necessarily be involved in the creative process of your project. They are not your extended marketing team. It is okay to "ASK" them if they would be okay with sharing the project upon completion, but it's ultimately up to them if they want to.

If they choose not to, you are not entitled to complain or yell at them. They are there to record for a character, anything beyond that is a courtesy.

### **I made a discord server for the project, JOIN IT!**

Again, you are not entitled to anything beyond the submissions of lines for a character. Having a discord server for your project is a great thing to have. It's great for team organization and workflow, but VOs are contractors and not part of your "team". You can invite them and if they choose to join your server, then they will. It should never be a requirement. It is a turn off.



## **But we need to live direct!**

Live directing, while beneficial is really asking a lot for unpaid work. Your project is not the only project these VOs are recording for. You don't know their life, their schedule, etc, expecting them to reschedule their lives to match yours for live direction (Especially if they're located across different time zones) is a red flag. Let them record on their own, if they are keen on live direction, they will let you know and you can work something out.

## **Voice Actor Conclusion**

Voice actors are a great commodity! They bring your characters to life in ways you never could have imagined. But they need to be treated with respect. As long as you are transparent and humble with them, they will be willing to work with you. Never offer pay to your team while withholding pay from your actors. Pay one, pay them all.

Do NOT put up casting calls BEFORE you have an actual team or proof of concept.

Stick to your established deadlines in your casting call.

It is okay to be an unpaid project, just be open and transparent about it from the start. Voice actors are great people and they will always raise the value of your project tenfold.

## **Production Pt 2- The Internal Workflow, Software, Hardware**

### **Making Your Project into An Animation**

This part is for teams, whether solo or a group, that have an animator in place. This will be a basic overview of what goes into producing your own animated web series. This is mainly from the perspective of a small creator standpoint and is structured specifically for that.

To start we're going to discuss some Voice Over terms. Why? Because knowing these will help decide the production of your project.

**ADR- Automated Dialogue Replacement:** Basically, "dubbing". It's weird considering it's not really "automatic", but hey, that's what they call it. So what is ADR? For animation this is when the original voice over track is replaced with a new one, primarily of a different language. This is what anime dubbing is considered. Different countries "dub" the anime in their language and then replace the original track. For animation this is when the animation is already created and the actors have to record to match the already pre-established lip flaps. This can be tricky and sometimes awkward when scripting and timing has to be done with rigid restrictions. The major downside to this is the actors don't get a ton of free reign with their acting.

**Prelay:** This is where the voice over is recorded first and the animation is modeled after the performances from its voice actors. This is most likely what your original animated series will be. Your voice actors will have the freedom and range to bring out performances with no restrictions.

### **Ideal Structure of Your Project's Development**

This is what has worked for me and what seems to work the best for small, web based animation projects.

1. **Scripting**
2. **VO Recording/Directing**
3. **VO Track Mixdowns of Scenes**
4. **Storyboard/Animatic based on Scene Audio Mixdown**
5. **Final Clean up Animation**
6. **Full Episode Render sans audio**
7. **Audio/Sound Design based on Full Episode Render**
8. **Final Episode Render with new polished Audio Track**

## 1: Scripting

This one should be self-explanatory. If you don't have scripts written in advance, then you shouldn't be moving forward with animation. While you don't have to have the entire project scripted out, you should have the main events outlines and a few scripts prepared in advance. Starting out, you should focus on one script at a time. This way you can start to become comfortable with the process of working on an animated series.

### **Do I need a specific screen writing software?**

No, not really. Any word processor will suffice.

### **What's the best format for scripting?**

It really depends, there's no single best answer here. Each writer has their own style. As long as your voice actors can read the script, understand their lines and direction then you're good to go.

## **Different Script Format Examples**

**Excel/Spreadsheet:** This is what I currently use. I adopted this during a localization project and found it easier for me to script for animation.

<b>Scene No:1</b>			
<b>Characters Present:</b>	Adam, Stephen, Karin, Veronica, Fenrir		
<b>Context of the scene:</b>	Battle is underway on the Martian surface.		
<b>Line #</b>	<b>Character</b>	<b>Dialogue</b>	<b>Notes</b>
	Karin	Just how many more of these little shits are there?! For fuck's sake!	Frustrated
	Comm Officer	Reports are reading about a dozen left, ma'am	
	Karin	How many times do I have to tell you to stop calling me, ma'am!	
	Veronica	Hey! Calm down and stay focused!	Reprimanding
	Descrip	Karin immediately turned her focus to her right where Veronica sat. She angrily pointed at Veronica and continued to squint in anger.	
	Karin	And you! Stop telling me what to do!	
	Descrip	Veronica rolled her eyes and ignored Karin's mild temper tantrum. She focused on the small monitor in front that pulled its visual feed from Stephen Novus' Frame, Alpha. Tiny explosions filled the screen and blocked her view.	
	Veronica	Stephen, just how much longer is this going to take?	
	Stephen	Can't tell, they sent some good pilots this time. Could take a while	Preoccupied, rushed response, slightly annoyed but not too much.
	Karin	The great Crimson Knight met his match?	Mocking
	Stephen	Tell her to concentrate on Adam. The fool went up against their lead unit	
	Veronica	And you just let him? The hell is wrong with you?!	Scolding
	Stephen	Bit busy right now!	
	Veronica	Fine, we'll do our best to hold out over here.	

## Film/Tv Screenplay Format: This is what I used to use.

OUR REASONS

*A beam of energy pierces through the Omega's cannons, causing it to explode. Alpha slashes through the Omega's legs and the machine topples.*

STEPHEN

You need to pay attention!

ADAM

I'm sorry...

STEPHEN

Set your comm frequency to neutral.

ADAM

Why?

STEPHEN

It'll allow you to communicate with them.

ADAM

Stephen?

STEPHEN

I'll handle everything from now on.  
You just comfort them. You've done enough.

*Adam opens up a comm link which creates a visual feed with the cockpit of the Omega. Amy is shown, bound to the chair, her face is looking towards the ground, motionless.*

ADAM

Amy!

## Basic Word Doc:



The numbers included were to help with audio editing. It was easier from an organizational standpoint to see the lines in a sequential order.

Which format you use is entirely up to you. There is no “right” or “wrong” answer here in regards to the “best” format. The key is to make recording easier for your voice actors. They should be able to easily identify their character’s lines and where they show up. The easier it is for them, the less likely you’ll have missing lines.

## 2: Voice Over Recording/Directing

Chances are you’re not a director. If you don’t have an experience director on board, it’s best to let your voice actors record on their own. Inexperienced directors can often lead to bad deliveries and performances from good actors. You can write directions in your script that the voice actors will be able to translate your directions into a good performance.

If you do have an experienced director, you can schedule live directing sessions with your voice actor, however, if this is an unpaid project, this should be optional and not a requirement. Voice Actors are freelance contractors and often have multiple projects going on at the same time. Scheduling can be difficult and more often than not, they will not respond well to “Required” live

directing sessions over Discord/Skype. Ask them first if they are willing, and if they are, then you can move on from there.

## **VO Communication and Deadlines**

Much like scripting, there is no set answer on time. The only constant is to be patient and understanding. Deadlines for lines being 2 days after a script is sent out is insulting and entitled. You have to realize that your project isn't the only one these actors are working on. A few weeks to a month is fair. Don't be shy to reach out to them when the set deadline is approaching to remind them. They committed to the project, regardless of pay.

## **Redos**

It is common that some takes may not be what you wanted and that's okay. Politely reach out to your actor and ask if they can redo those specific lines. Give clearer direction on what you want.

## **Ghost Voice Actors**

This is an unfortunate reality. Sometimes actors may "ghost" you. Reasons vary, maybe they're not reliable or mature, maybe something came up in their life- you never truly know. To determine if you're being "ghosted", do and review the following: Send out reminder emails about deadlines. If they do not respond, send a second and maybe a third one, at minimum a week apart. If they do not respond to the polite follow-up emails, send a final email that suggests if they do not respond within a few days, that you'll be forced to recast. If they respond to that email then you can work things out, if they don't, then recast. It's a pretty crappy situation, but as long as you're always polite, you'll be in the clear.

## ***3: Mixing Voice Overs to Create Scene Mixdowns for Animation***

Ideally in the scripting phase you'll have broken down your episodes into various "Scenes". It's a lot easier to not only organize your lines, but a hell of a lot easier to animate your episode. Breaking your episode into multiple scenes will allow you to create more manageable animation files that won't end up being a gig or more. Trust me, when files get excessive, a nightmare migraine is bound to happen. The larger the file, the more likely you'll be to experience unexpected crashing/freezing. Some people think animated episodes are a single animation file but that is so not the case.

For example, Flash/Animate had a 16,000 frame limit before the program would stop rendering your animation. That's not enough for a full episode. The goal is to break apart your episode into a few animation files that can be individually rendered and then thrown together later in a video editing program.

This is why having scenes in your script is super important. They'll act as an outline for how many different animation files you'll need. As such, you'll mix the audio for these individual



scenes in their own audio sessions. So if you ever need to go back to fix something, it'll be that much easier to correct.

So, you have your lines from your voice actors and you're ready to mix that first scene of your episode, now what? What program do you use? There's a few DAWs (digital audio workstations) out there and which you use is entirely up to you. For this guide I'll using Adobe Audition as the example. But here's a short list of available DAWs.

***Adobe Audition (SASS \$20.99 /mo)***

<https://www.adobe.com/products/audition.html>

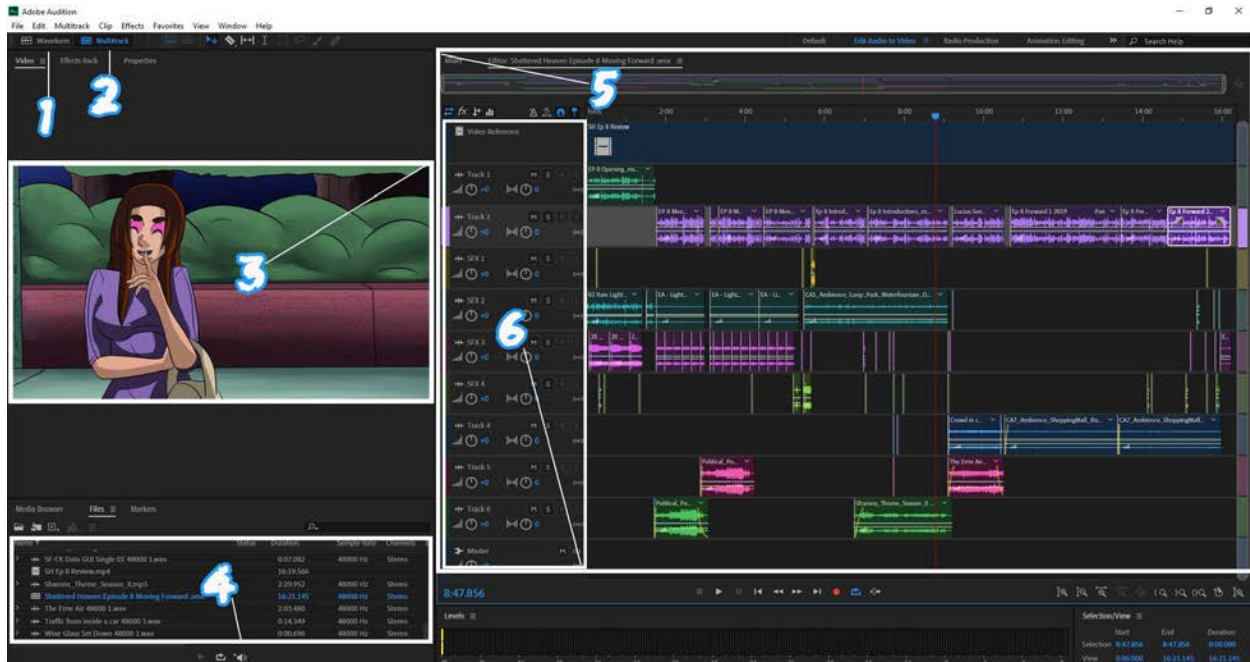
***Reaper (Free)***

<https://www.reaper.fm/>

## Adobe Audition Basics

This will be a very bare bones overview of Adobe Audition and the very basic tools you'll need to use in order to create your scene audio mixes. We'll be covering basic cut and move tools, levels/volume, basic noise reduction, single and multi-track displays.

The overall basic view of Adobe Audition. This shows the final audio process that I utilize after the animation is fully done. Here I'll handle sound effects, music and VO audio tracks to make sure they properly align with the episode.



- 1) **Waveform:** Single audio file view
- 2) **Multitrack:** What is in the image above. A multitrack session is just that, a file that houses multiple audio tracks.
- 3) **Video Preview:** Lets you utilize a single video reference file to make audio placement efficient.
- 4) **Files:** This is where all of your individual audio and video files will be located for your session.
- 5) **Mixer/Editor:** This window is where you'll be handling your audio organization. From here you can edit and arrange audio tracks, use the cut tool (razor icon) to split audio tracks if needed.
- 6) **Tracks:** The individual "Timelines" of sorts where you can place your audio. You can utilize the options on the track controller to handle audio volume, audio direction (left/right) for all the audio in that specific track.

Now that you've seen an overview of what you'll most likely be utilizing in Audition, let's break this down in a more sequential sequence.

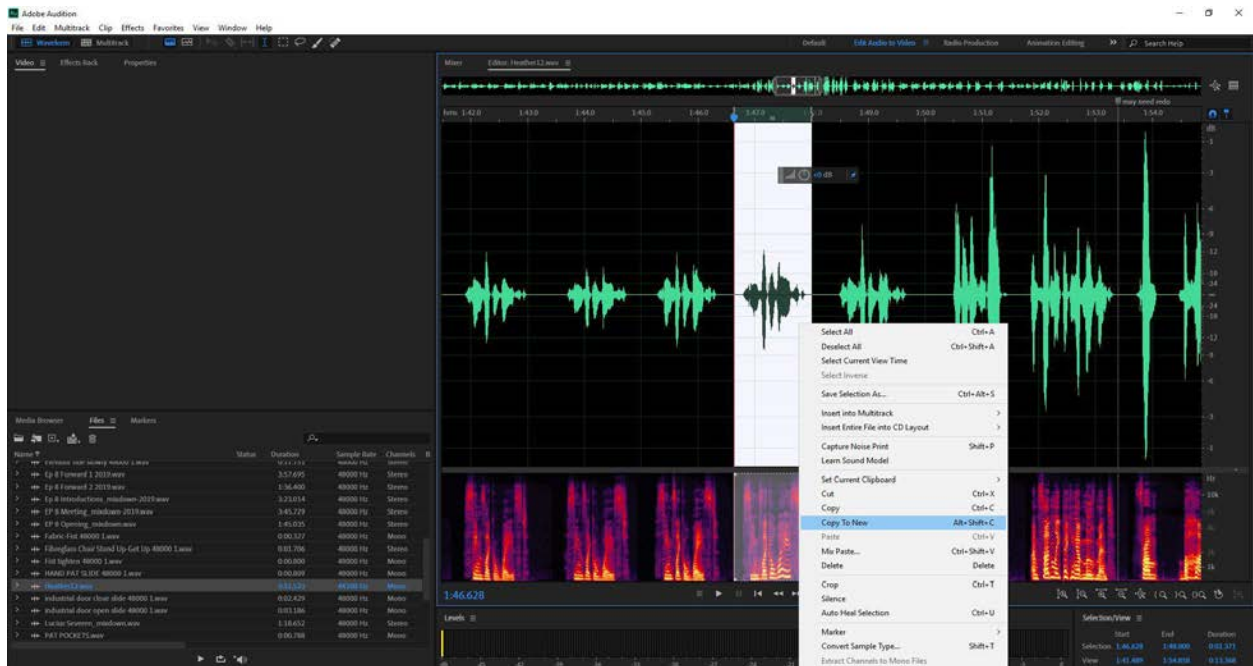
### Receiving Lines from Voice Actors

Depending on how you are running your requirements for your VOs, you may receive lines in different formats (mp3, wav) or different breakdowns (all lines in a single file, individual lines cut up). It's recommended to have your voice actors record and send you all the lines in a single file. This is heavily emphasized if this is an unpaid project, breaking up lines can be extremely time consuming for actors, Leave the line cutting to your audio team.

Below is an example of a full episode session from a voice actor. You can see the different waveforms that represent their recording. When looking at the wave forms you can notice that 5 of them are of a similar pattern. This is an indicator of the same line having multiple takes for you to choose from.

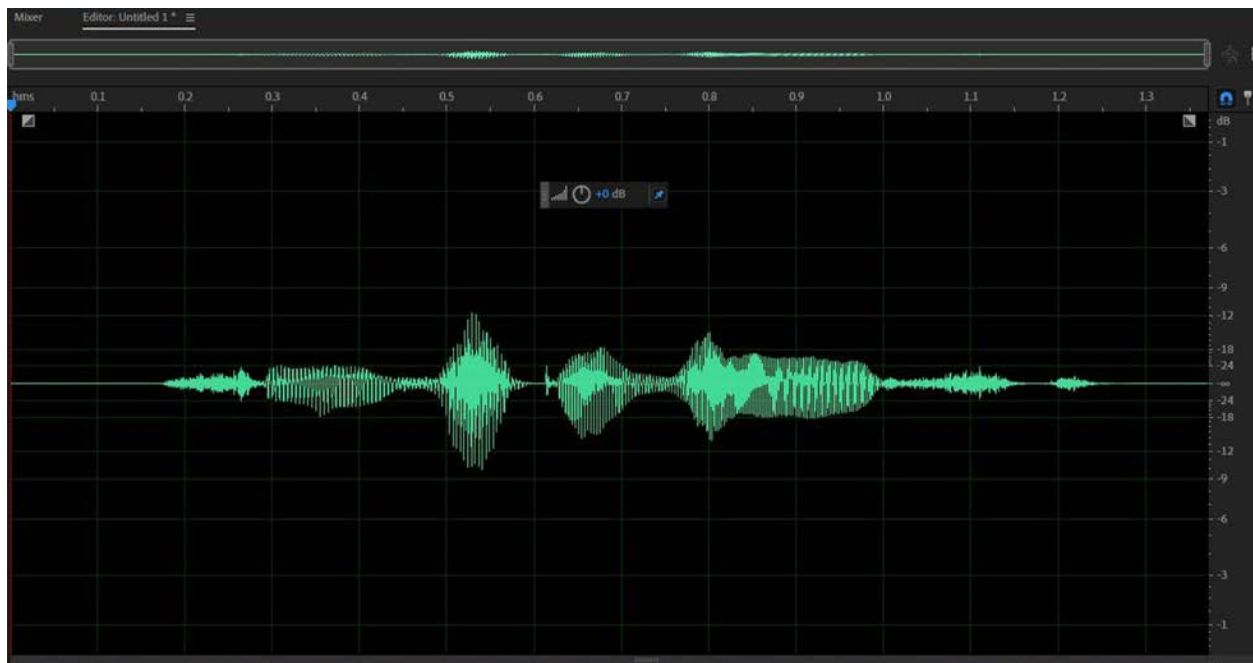


After you listen and decide which take is the more appropriate version, you can remove it from the full file and create a new audio file.



You can accomplish this by selecting the take and either saving the selection as a new file (ctrl+alt+s) or “copy to new” (alt+shift+c).

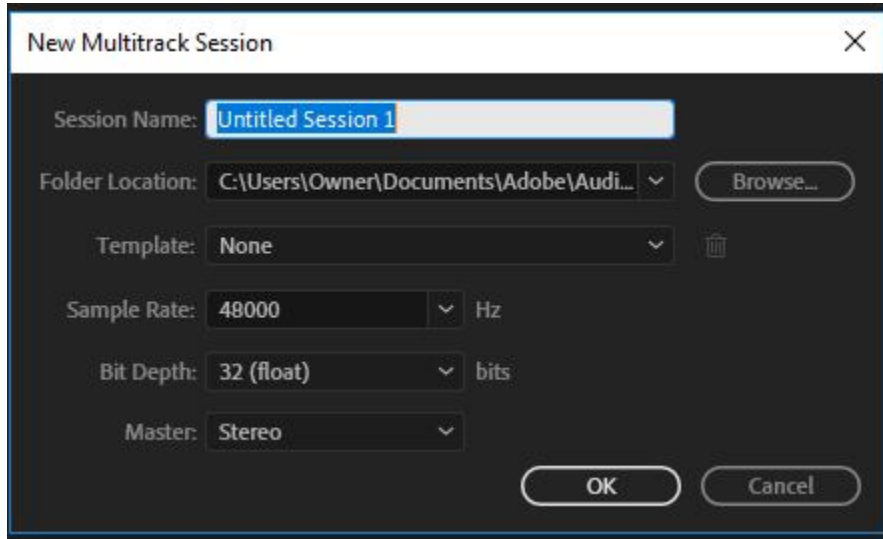
When you do, you’ll be greeted with a brand new audio file.



Cutting lines is integral as the initial step towards mixing the audio for your scenes. Once all the Voice Actor lines are cut, you can then start placing them together in a new multitrack session.

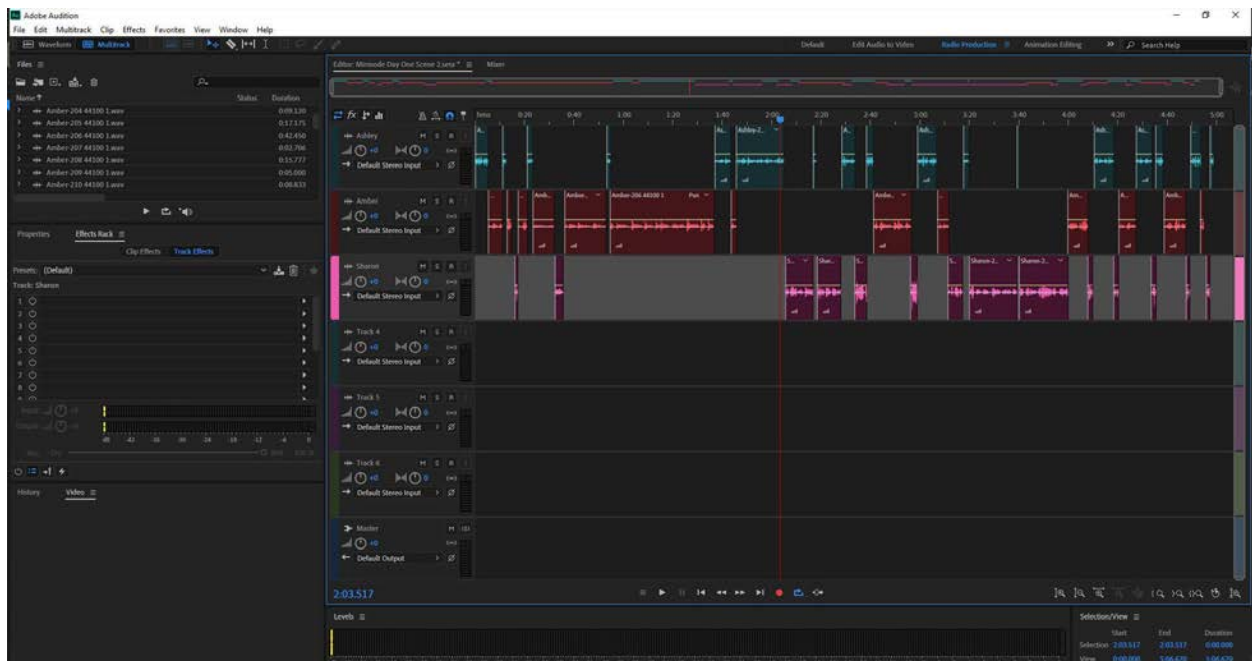
## Creating a New Multitrack Session

You can do this a couple ways. If you're already in Audition looking at a single wave file from a VO, you can just press the "Multitrack" button on the top left.



Name the session and select where it'll be located. If you're not super familiar with audio, don't worry about options like Sample Rate, Bit Depth or Master. The default settings are fine. I do **HIGHLY** recommend having someone with Audio Engineering experience. It'll make your life a lot easier and your audio quality will be superb. For this we're going to stick to the basics.

You can also press Ctrl+N to create a new session.



Above I only have 3 characters in the scene. Because of this, I only have 3 audio tracks. We're not worrying about sound effects just yet, right now the focus is on putting together the various actor lines. For animation you're going to have to reference your script for any descriptions and potential movement that are required. Spacing is going to be an estimation game for now. Since you'll be animating to this audio mixdown, this is where you set the pacing for the animation. If you created too little space between lines for say a sequence of walking or action, you can always return to the session file and correct accordingly after you roughed out the animation.

Once all your VO lines are in position, export the full mixdown as either an mp3 or a wav.

For all intents and purposes, the difference between a wav and an mp3 file is compression. Mp3s are compressed and result in a lower quality than wavs. Wavs are raw higher quality audio. For the end of your production when you return to polish up the audio with sound effects and full design, you'll want to export your audio as wavs. But for now, mp3s are fine and easier to work with.

With the scene mixdown in hand it's ready to work on that animatic.

#### ***4: Animatics/Storyboards***

This will be extremely brief. This is just a basic guide going over animation software and the simplest tools. This will not be a full on guide on how to animate. This guide is made with the assumption that you have an animation team already established.

Ideally you're going to want to storyboard your scenes before you begin to animate. Think of a storyboard as a rough comic that will serve as the bare bones for your animation.

I personally do not storyboard due to my own time constraints. I jump straight into animatics. But don't be like me if you can help it. As such I won't really be going into storyboarding too much.

#### **Honorable Mention: Storyboarding Software**

To be honest, any good art program will suffice here. But there is an industry standard program that is specifically built for this.

***Toon Boom Storyboard Pro (Perm License - \$999 - Monthly - \$58 - Annually - \$342)***

<https://www.toonboom.com/products/storyboardpro>



## **Animation's First Step: Animatics**

For this I will be using Adobe Flash CS6 (Animate). Flash(Animate) is probably one of the easiest programs that lets you dive into animation without becoming overwhelmed. There are tons of different animation programs out there, but I'm only fluent in 2 of them - Flash/Animate and Clip Studio Paint. You do not have to utilize the programs I reference in this guide, find what works for you. If anything, use this guide as a jumping point into your own animation journey.

### **Animation Software**

Adobe Flash/Animate (SASS \$20.99 /mo)

<https://www.adobe.com/products/animate.html>

Clip Studio Paint (EX Version) (One time purchase - US\$219.00 | US\$49.99)

<https://www.clipstudio.net/en>

Krita (Free)

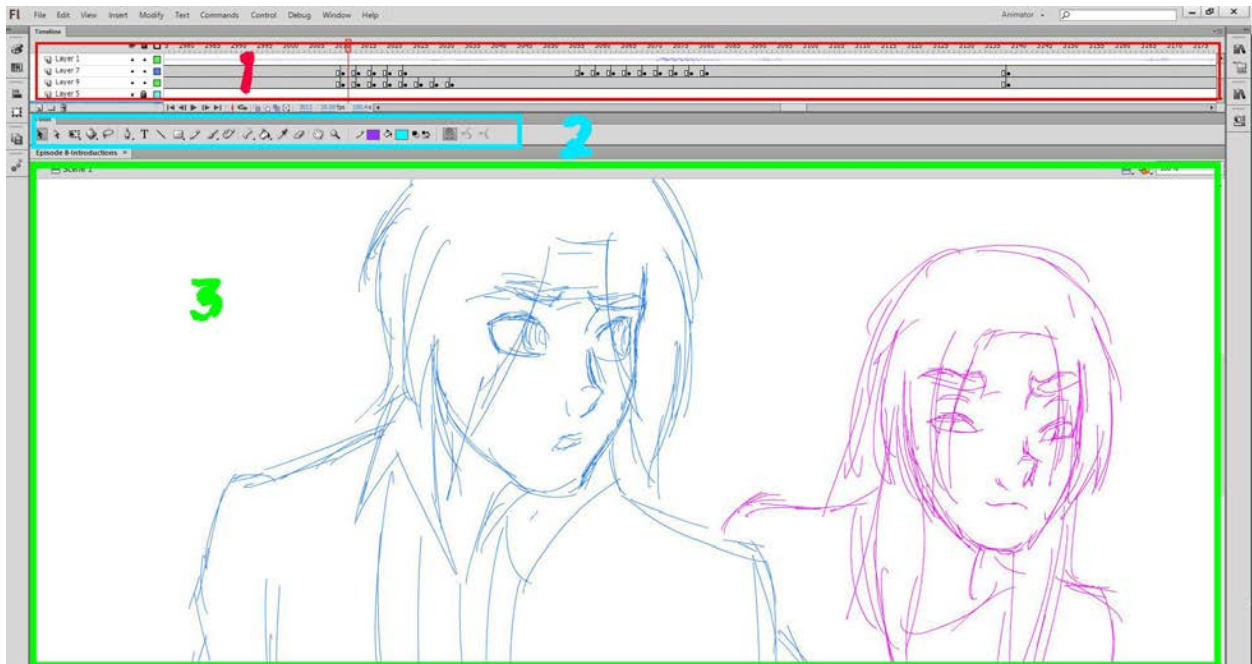
Tutorial- [https://docs.krita.org/en/user\\_manual/animation.html](https://docs.krita.org/en/user_manual/animation.html)

<https://krita.org/en/>

Toon Boom Harmony (Perm License - \$375 - Monthly - \$23 - Annually - \$135)

<https://www.toonboom.com/products/harmony>

## Flash CS6 Overview



1 Timeline: This is where your layers, keyframes, inbetween frames will be visible and controlled.

**Layer:** Sequential or stacked positioning for art/assets. The layer on the top will cause whichever art or asset to be shown above all over layers, etc.

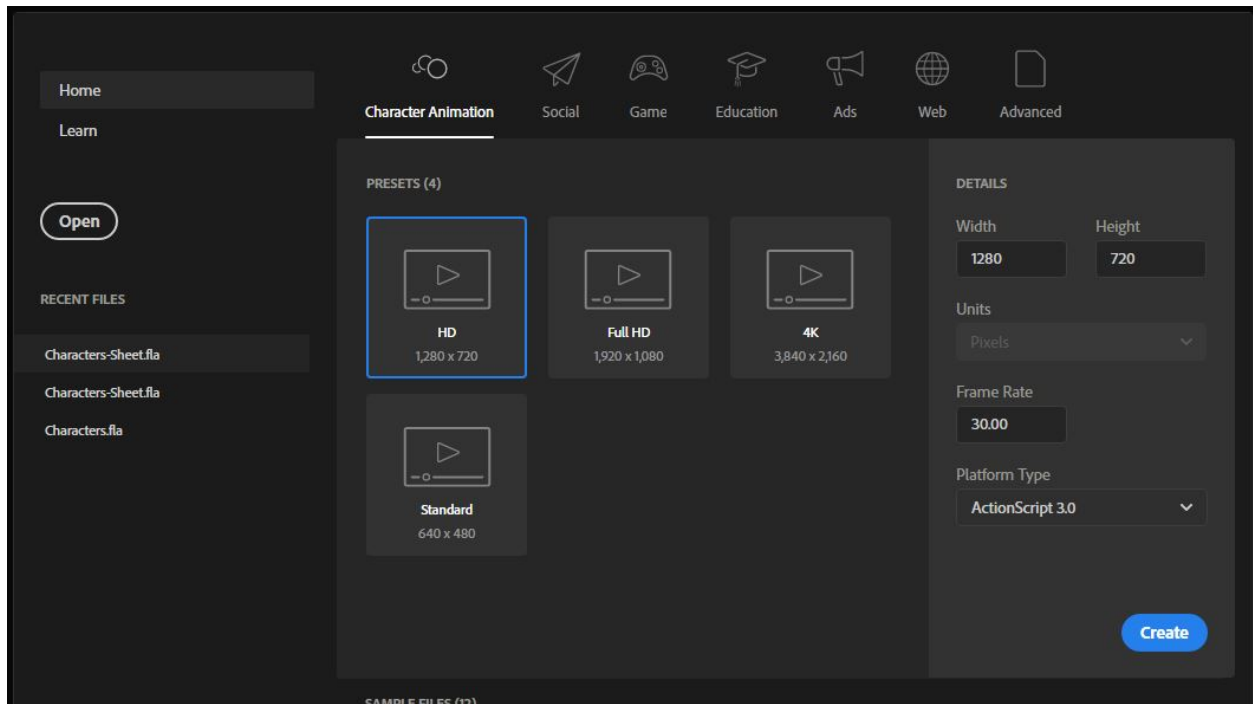
**Keyframe:** The main/strongest drawing in a sequence of animation. These usually have the longest screen time and should have the strongest detail.

**Inbetween Frames:** The frames between keyframes that generally create the movement. These frames can and should have lesser detail than keys. These are the Frames that are generally screen capped by Tumblr or sassy anime fans in order to “prove” that a show has “bad animation”.

2 Tools: Paintbrush, pencil, pen, fill, etc, are all located here.

3 Canvas: This is where you’ll be doing all your art and asset placement.

## Making your Document



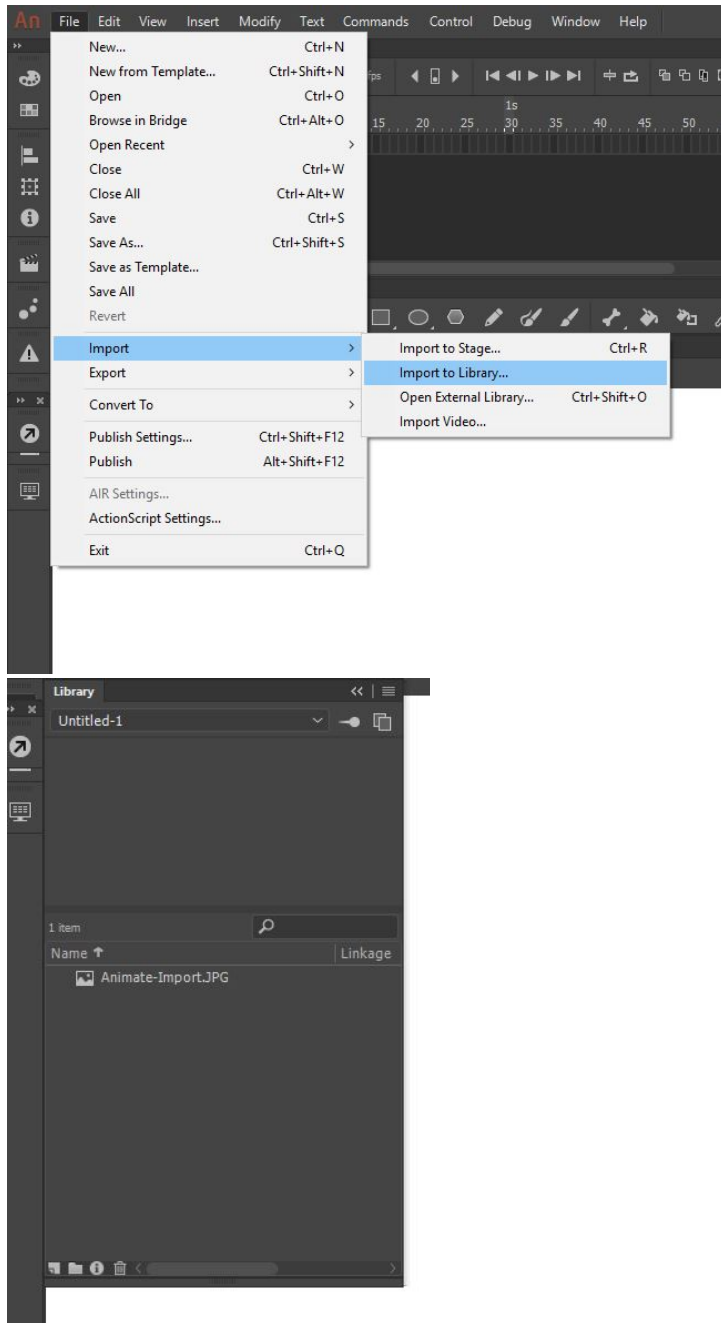
This is from Adobe Animate (Flash). It's just the newest version of Flash that has a different UI (User Interface) and some updated features.

**Full HD:** 1920 X 1080 Dimensions (What I use)

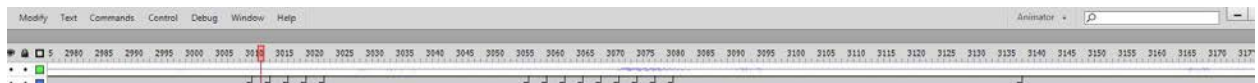
**Frame Rate (FPS):** How many frames make up 1 second of time. 24 fps is standard.

## Bringing in your Scene's Audio Mixdown

Now you're ready to get to work. Note about Flash/Animate, Wav files don't really work well, so this is another reason to have your mixdown files exported to mp3. Import your mp3 to your document's library first.



Once you do, you can find your file in the Library section in Flash/Animate. To access your library, simply click ctrl+L. From here you can drag and drop your file onto the canvas. The wave form will then show up in the timeline, represented in the layer and frame you dropped it on.

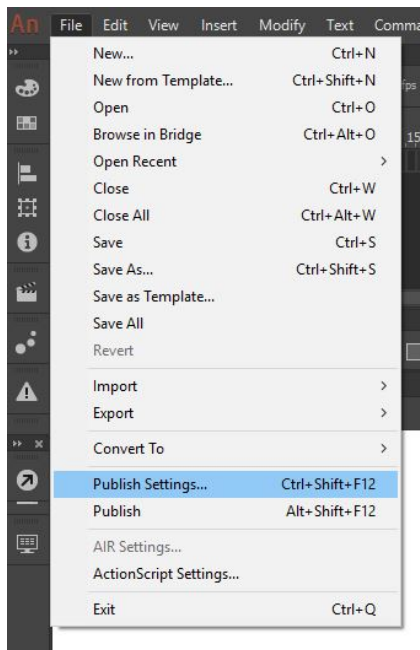


You will have to extend the Frame to match the length of the audio, otherwise you'll be stuck at the default 1 Frame on the timeline.

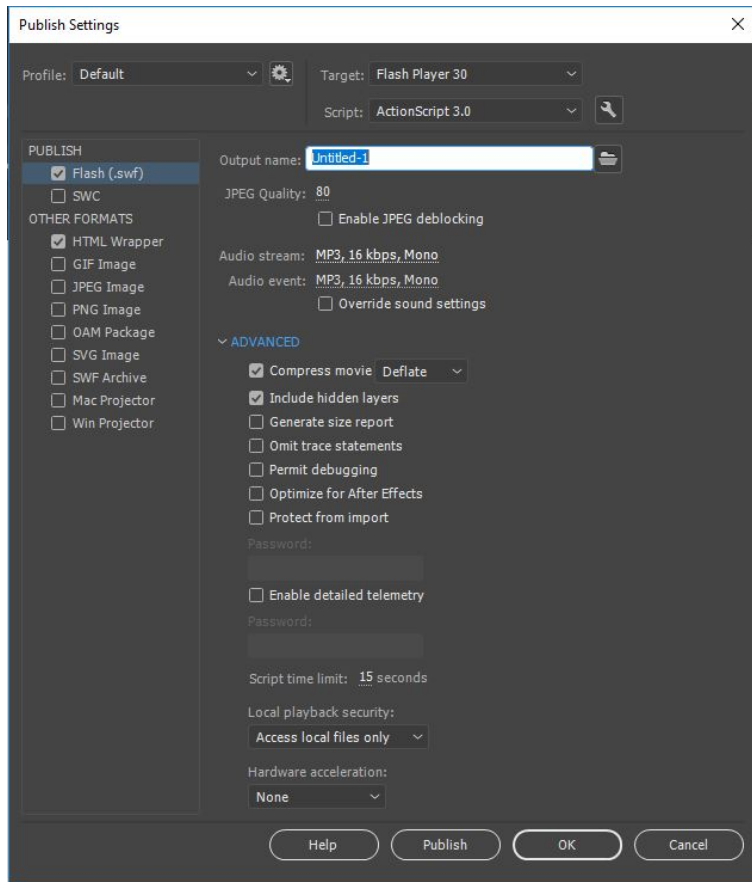


In the Animate version of Flash, there is a marker for every second. Time for math, look at how long your audio mixdown is and keep going on the timeline until you reach the appropriate marker. Then right click on the timeline and hit insert frame.

When you hit Enter to play, you'll notice your audio quality sounds pretty bad. Don't stress, we just have to update the Publish Settings.

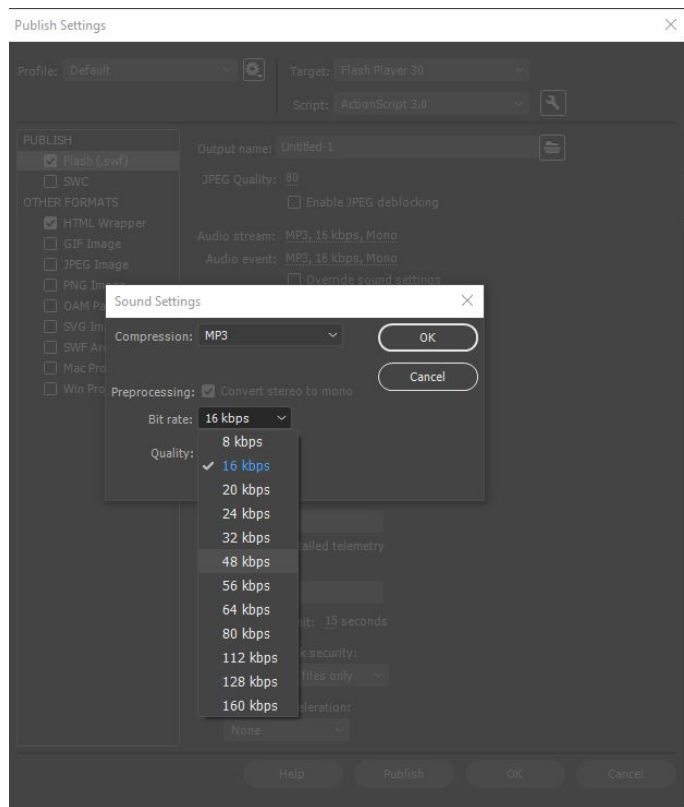


Ctrl+Shift+F12 will open your document's Publish Settings.



Look for “Audio Stream” and you’ll notice the default is set to “MP3, 16 kbps, Mono”. We’re going to change that. That text is clickable, click it and you’ll open up a new window of options.





Set the kbps to 48 and hit “Ok”. Now your audio quality will sound crisp. You’re good to go!

## 1’s 2’s and 3’s?

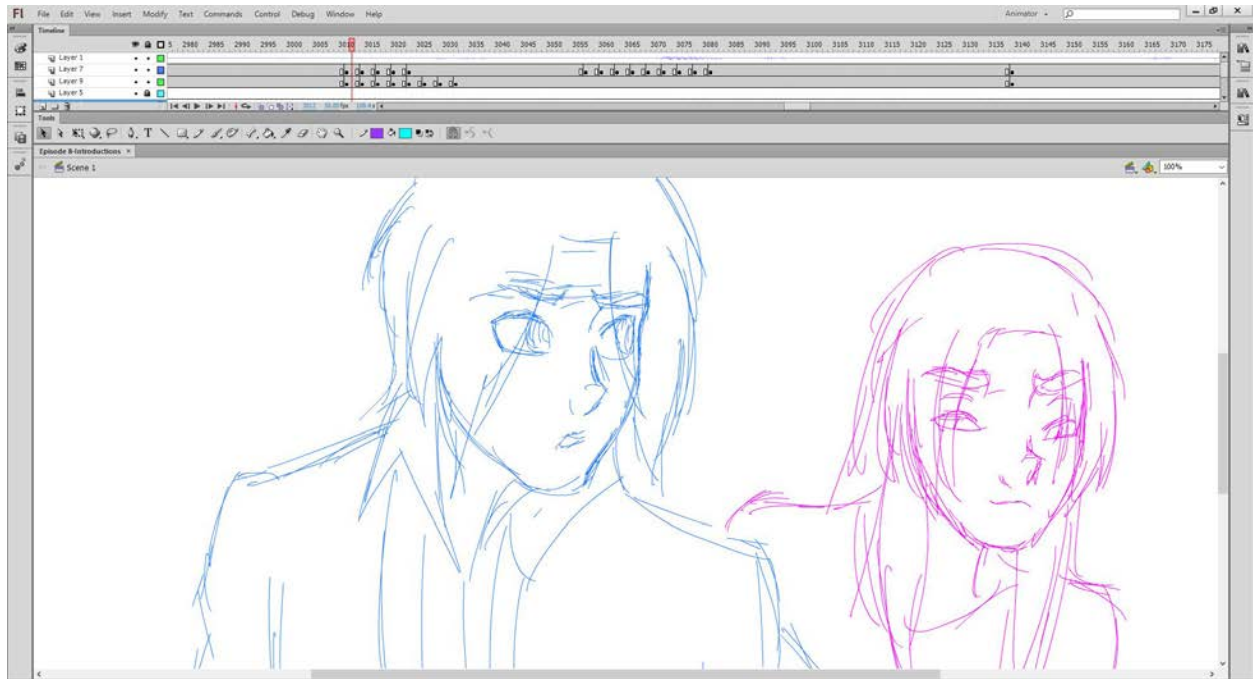
When talking shop with other animators, it’s likely that you’ll hear this term. Animating on “1s” means there’s a new drawing every Frame. Animating on “2s” means a new drawing every other Frame and on “3s” a new drawing every 3 Frames. For the fastest and smoothest animation, you use “1s”, for slower animation, use “3s”. It’s also highly dependent on your FPS. As a small project, chances are you won’t have the time to go full on with “1s”. You can mix and match to create different and unique timing. Experiment and see what works for you!

## Do the thing

With your document set and your audio in place it’s time to work on your rough animatic. Use whichever tool is more comfortable for you, brush or pencil. You can experiment with pressure and brush/pencil sizing, etc. Use the audio and the performances from your Voice Actors to help determine the flow and pacing of your scene. This will be a lot easier if you have a storyboard to reference, I highly recommend having one first.

A lot of this is creative freedom, experiment and have fun bringing your characters to life.

Animatics aren't usually the full animation, they're sort of like motion comics where you animate the Keys roughly so you have the understanding of the animation's flow. Once that's established, in clean up you can add inbetween Frames to polish and smooth everything out. I, personally, animate everything in the animatic. My rough animatics are basically just sketched out episode animations which I'll trace over and clean up.



## ***5 Final Clean up Animation***

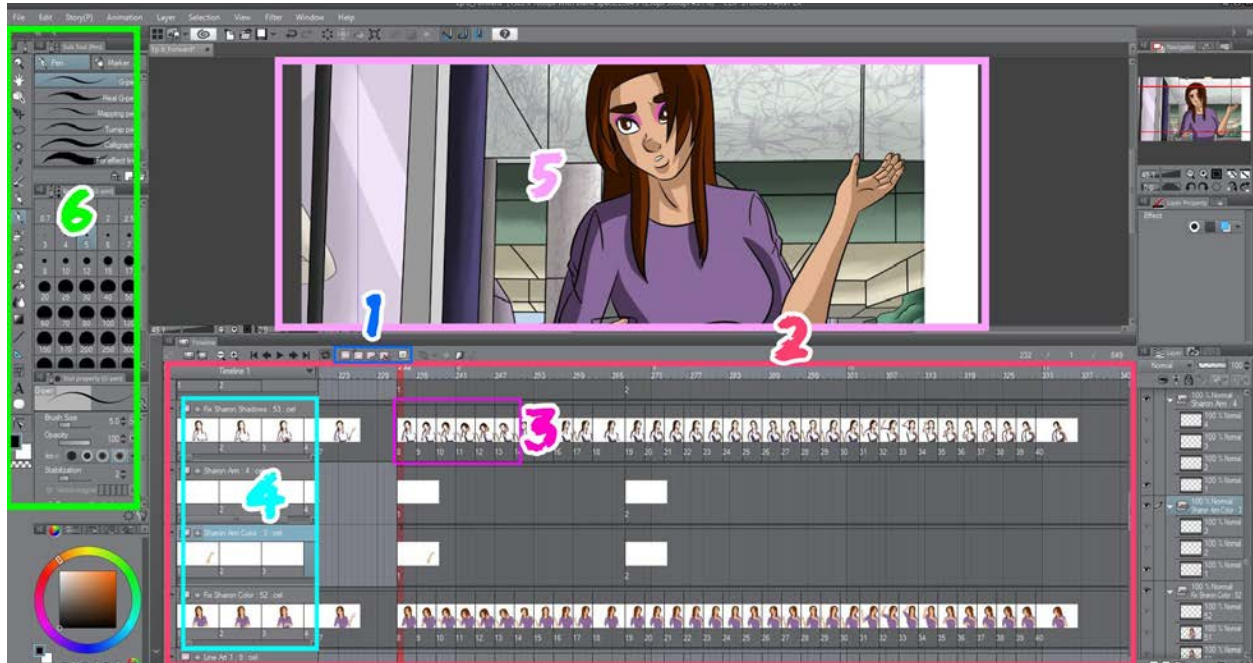
### **Render that Animatic or Don't.**

Here's where things get subjective. You don't have to render out the animatic and use a different program to clean it up. You can simply choose to do everything in Flash/Animate. You can just create layers above your roughed out animation and draw over the Frames below. That's what I used to do. Everything in Flash. But from this point onwards, we'll be switching over to Clip Studio Paint EX for animation clean up and polish.

***Note: When I was working on the episode that's sampled in this guide, Clip Studio Paint EX did NOT have an audio feature. That's why I did my animatics in Flash and not CSP.***

## Clip Studio Paint Overview

**NOTE:** You need the full EX version of CSP to have full animation abilities. The Pro version has a limit and is mainly for short animated gifs.



1

1. Add a New Animation Folder: Where all individual animation cells/layers/frames are contained. These folders act the same way as layers do in Flash/Animate.
2. Add a New Animation Cel/Frame: See “3”, adds a new Frame to the timeline in its respected Animation Folder.
3. Specify Cels: Instead of inserting a blank cel, this option lets you choose from a list of cels/Frames you’ve already made.
4. Delete Cel: Deletes the Cel/Frame that’s currently selected.
5. Onion Skin: Enabling this allows you to see the previous Frame at a low opacity. Extremely important to have enabled.

**2 The Timeline:** All of your animation will be controlled here. Animation Folders and Frames will be visible here.

**3 Frames:** In CSP Frames are also considered “Cels and/or Layers”.

**4 Animation Folders**

**5 Main Canvas**

**6 Tools**

## **Rendering your Animatic from Flash/Animate**

Before making your new CSP document, you need to have your animatic reference video ready for import. CSP works with both AVIs and Mp4s (Windows), Movs and Mp4s (Macs). For some reason I've found Mp4s to be a bit laggy, while AVIs aren't. Weird, considering AVIs are the bigger and more intensive format.

You can render your file directly from Flash/Animate, but using a third party program tends to be better. Newgrounds came up with Swivel years ago and it's been what I've used for years.

<https://www.newgrounds.com/wiki/creator-resources/flash-resources/swivel>

After you publish your animation into a swf file, you convert it into the file format of your choice. My process may differ from what you find easier.

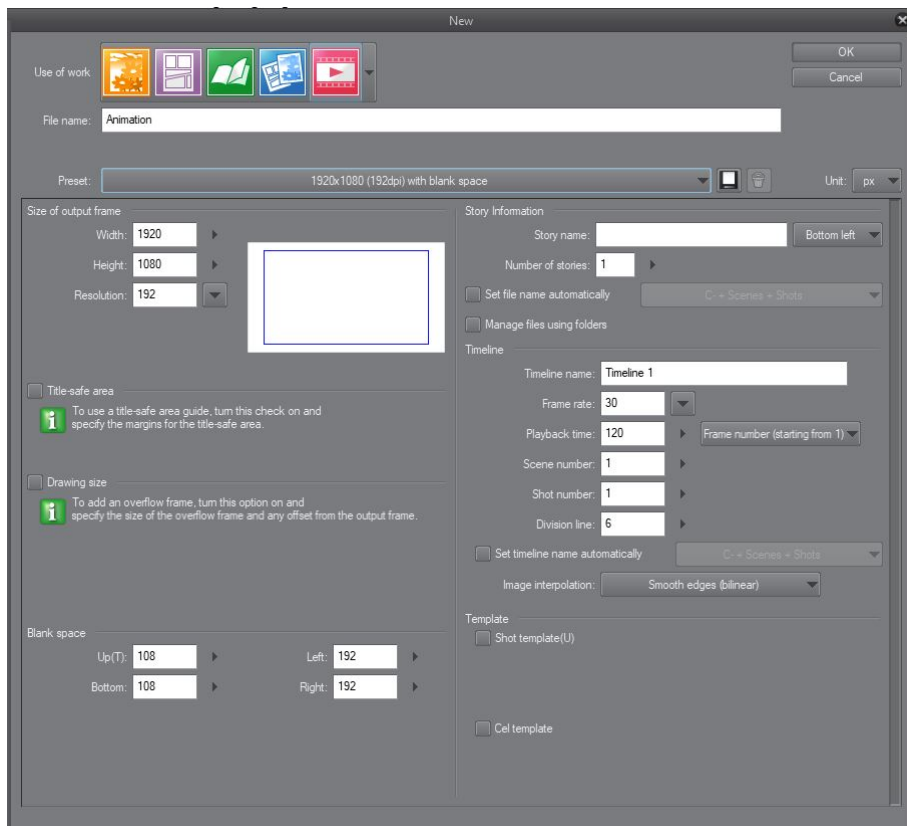
SWF to Mp4. Mp4 to AVI using Premiere Pro. I end up adjusting the settings of the animatic in Premiere Pro as well as chop up bigger scenes into smaller reference files. I've learned that after some time, probably around over a minute or so, the reference file stops "Rendering" in CSP. I'll be animating over the reference file but then the animatic in the reference file will freeze on a frame and not go any further. The file may still expand for more time, but the visual doesn't move. I don't know why this is, if it's a computer limit or I just overstepped my bounds haha, but it happens. To compensate, I'd chop up a scene into multiple short videos that last about a minute. Some CSP documents will have 2 or 3 reference animatic clips within. This is just my process, I also tend to overdo a lot in terms of graphics so it's probably just a problem I create myself by going full on with resolution even though 72dpi is fine for this since it's not print. You may find just exporting your animatic to Mp4 works flawlessly, and if that's the case, great!

## **New Animation Document in CSP**

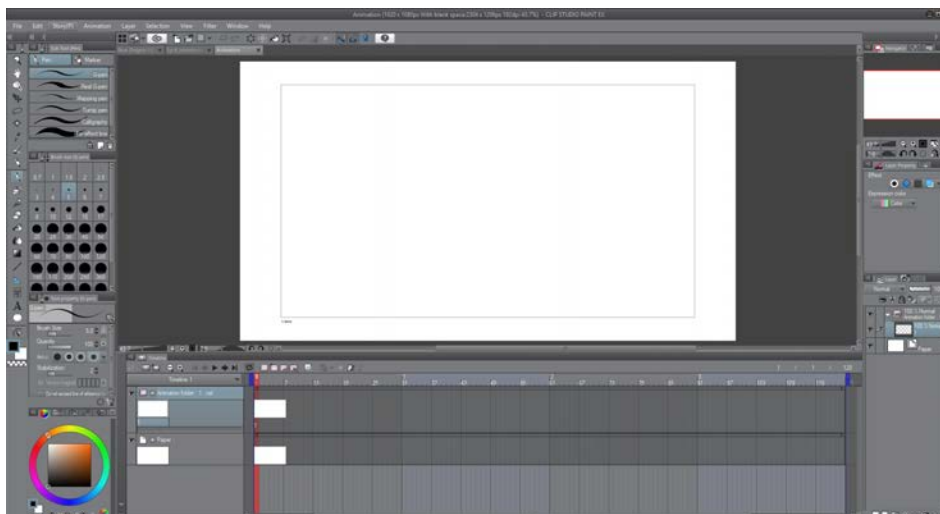
When making a new animation document in CSP, you're going to want it to match the settings of your animatic document. This means dimensions, if you went Full HD 1920 X 1080 and FPS. If you don't do this, your animatic reference won't match up and that'll just be awkward.

When making a new document in CSP, the program has preset thumbnails that represent a type of document. For our purposes we're selecting the video/play button logo for Animation. There's a lot of options here but for this guide we'll only focus on the "Size of output frame" and the "Frame rate".

The output Frame will be the same dimensions that were chosen in the animatic document. The same goes for Frame rate. Resolution by default for Full HD is 192 dpi.

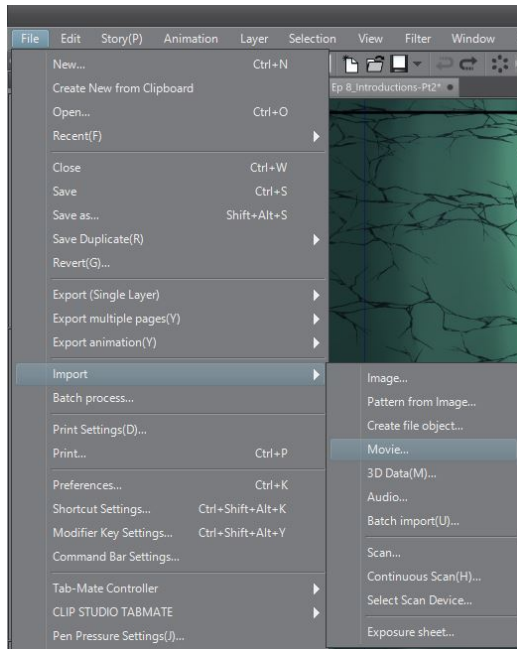


Once you fill in your information you're greeted with your new document.



### Import your video reference file

Under File > Import you'll be able to choose different media formats to bring in. Select "movie" to bring in your video.



Your video object file will create a new Animation Folder on your timeline.

I personally lower the opacity of the video file so I can draw/animate over it.



In order to lower the opacity you have to have the folder for the animation object selected. Then on the Layer toolbar you can adjust the blending mode and opacity to your liking.





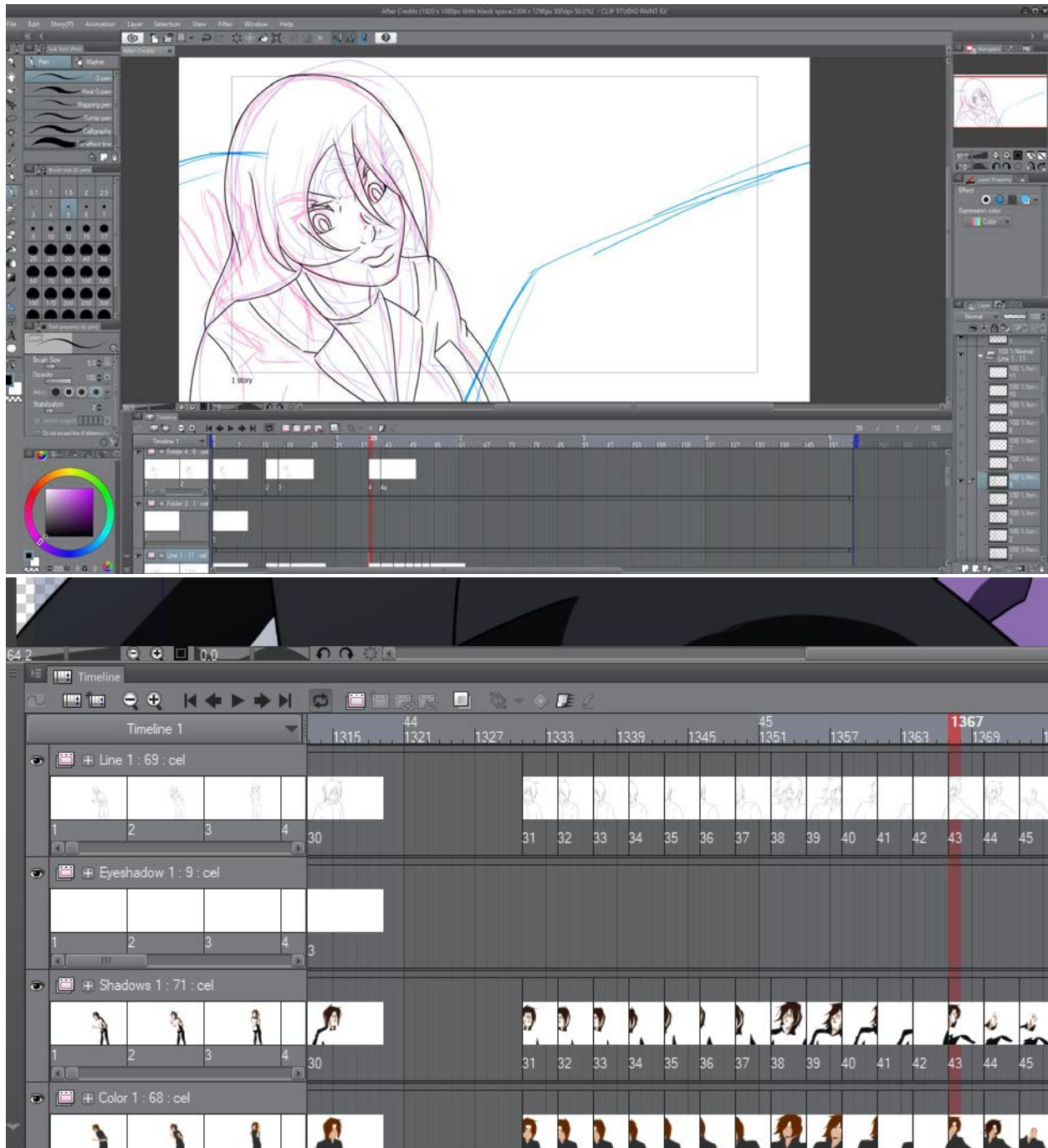
With the video reference set, it's time to bring in the audio mixdown next. Like you did with the video file, you import audio the same way, except you select “audio” instead of “movie”.

A new animation folder will be created just for the audio. I personally save the lip flaps/audio matching for last. But you can do it as you go, whichever suits your preference.



## Frame Line Art and Coloring

One of the biggest things I like with CSP's animation vs Flash/Animates, is that layers acknowledge one another. I'm not entirely sure if Animate fixed this, but in Flash CS6 if you wanted to color your line art, it all had to be on the same Frame. Which is fine I guess, but that led to a lot of errors in coloring or during correction. Possibly coloring over the line art, etc. In CSP that isn't an issue.



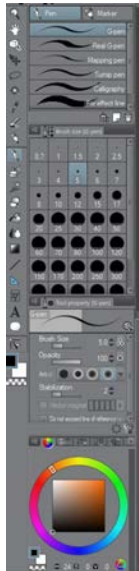


I generally have 6 different main Animation Folders.

1. **Line #:** This is the top layer and sets the parameters for the layers below to follow. All line art is done in this folder. I give it a number when I have more than 1 character on the screen at the same time.
2. **Eyeshadow #:** This is more additional aesthetics than anything. Any feature for a character or object that is not part of the main color scheme.
3. **Shadows #:** This folder covers all the shading.
4. **Color #:** Flat colors for characters are here.
5. **BG Line #:** Main line art for backgrounds.
6. **BG Color #:** Main color art for backgrounds.

### Draw and Animate over that Reference Video

At this point it should be self-explanatory. Reanimate your scene using the reference animatic as your guide. Make as many Animation Folders as you need for your organization. Which tool you use is up to your discretion, much like with Flash/Animate.



There's a plethora of available brushes, play around and see what works best for you!

## Lip Flaps and Audio Syncing

There's generally 2 distinct styles when it comes to animating lip flaps.

**The “anime”:** Mouth movement is limited to 3 position. It doesn't look the best, but it's the easiest to do, especially with a small team on a limited budget.



**Phonetic Lip Movement:** This is a bit more tedious and difficult. Here you're creating unique mouth shapes that will match the realistic movement that comes with pronouncing certain consonants and vowels. It looks a lot better but it's extremely time consuming. Not the most ideal for solo or small teams.

The Animator's Survival Kit by Richard Williams has a great reference sheet for this. Honestly, it's a great book that every animator should pick up. It really helps to beat in the basics of animation.

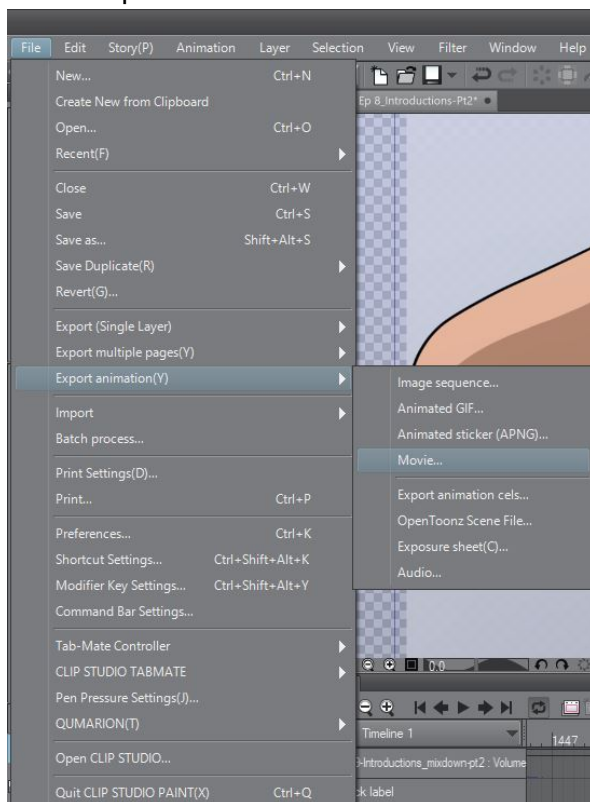
<https://www.amazon.com/Animators-Survival-Kit-Principles-Classical/dp/086547897X/>

Which style you choose for your animation is up to you. It's important to be realistic about the scope of your project and the tools at your discretion. When starting out, don't bite off more than you can chew. Stick to the "anime" method of lip flaps to help save you time. There's no shame there.

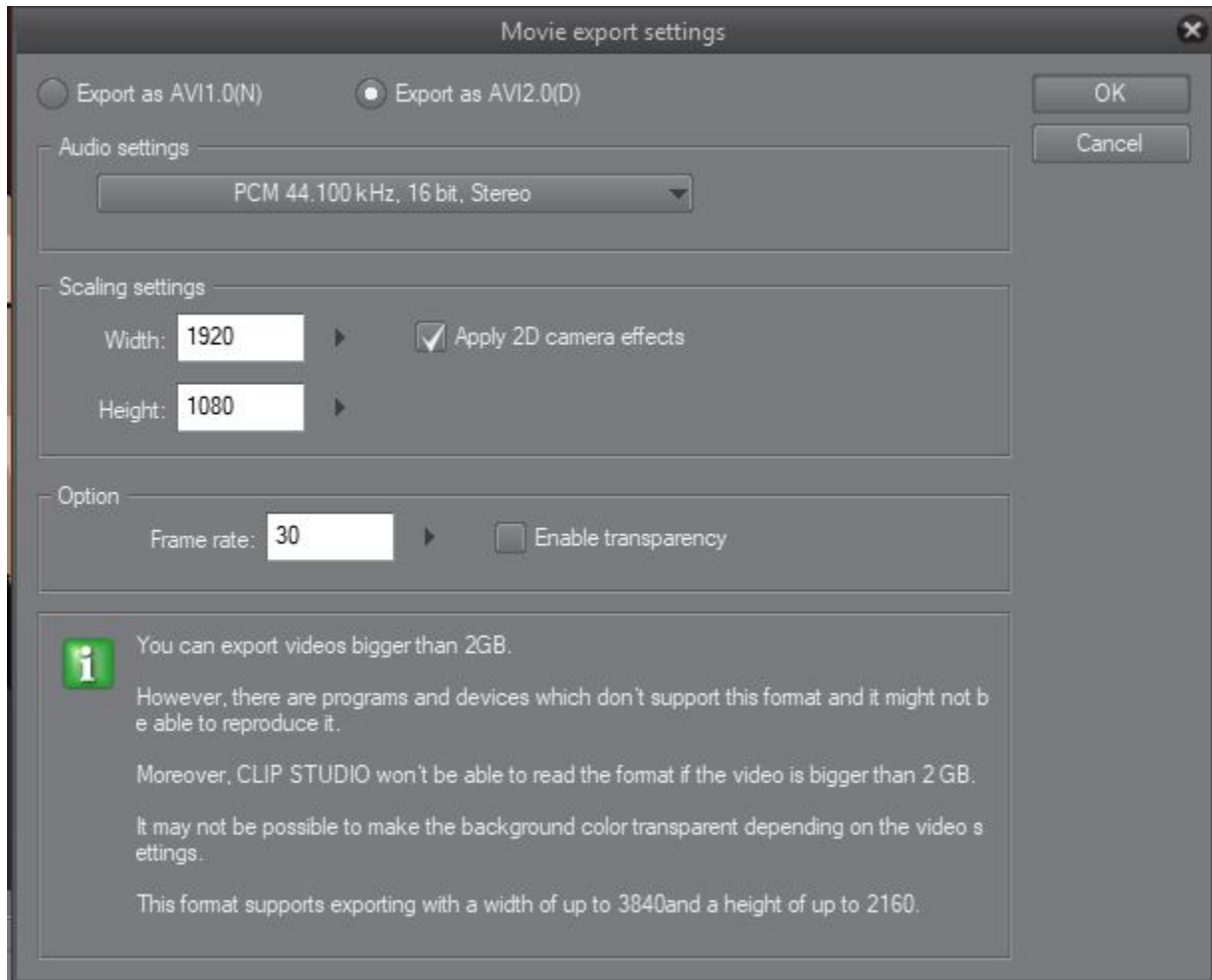
### Wrapping up your Scene's Clean up Animation

Once you've finished animating over your reference, it's time to export it.

File > Export > Movie



This is done on a Windows computer, so keep that in mind. AVI 1.0(N) and AVI 2.0 (D) are the options you're given. After trial and error I've found that AVI 2 is the way to go. Don't worry about the audio settings, you're going to be replacing the audio with a final polished mixdown later on.



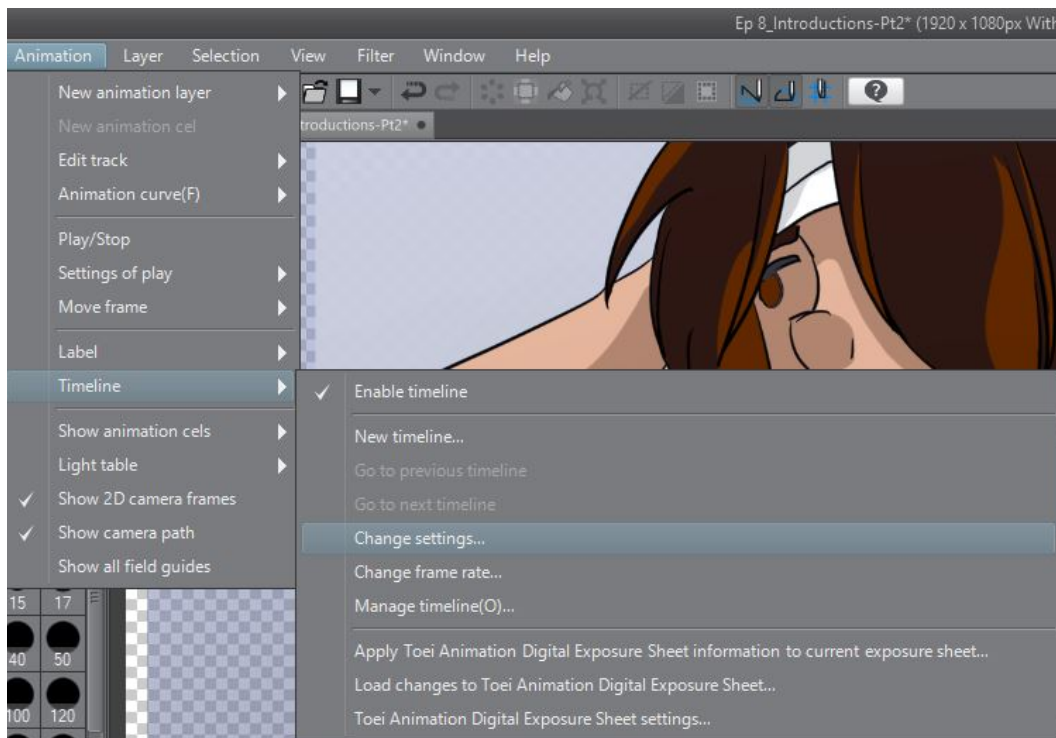
The final window is all about video compression. I go between MJPEG Compressor normally and Uncompressed when I have a need for a render with a transparent background. Uncompressed are huge AVI files, so be aware. Luckily, CSP allows you to alter the timeline so you can export only a specific portion of animation. If there's an area that needs transparency, you can set it so the timeline is only active between those Frames and export that.

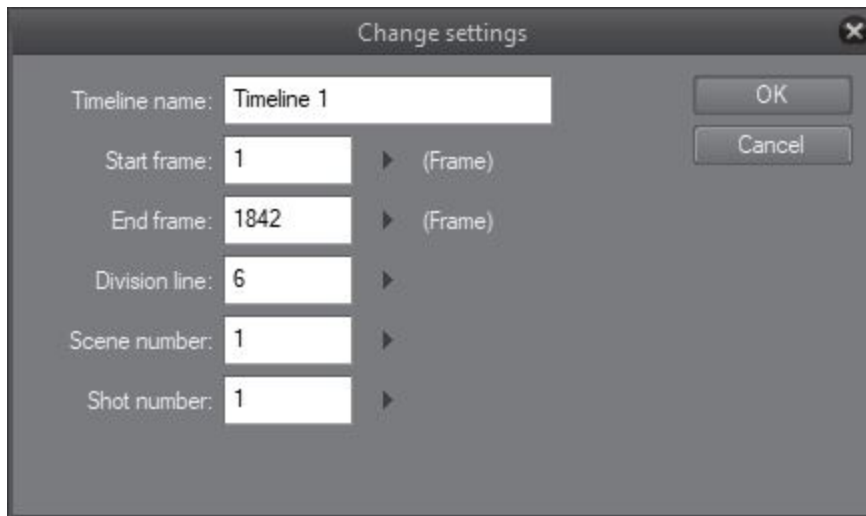
## Timeline Settings

You can do this 1 of 2 ways. The Simplest and most direct way is by manually dragging the Timeline beginning and ending markers to where you want them.

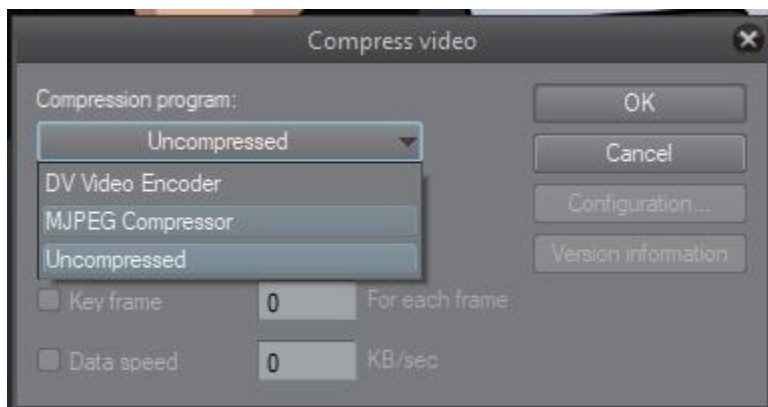


But when you have larger Timelines that might be a bit more annoying. When that's the case you can adjust the settings.





Just make sure you know the Frame numbers of the area you want to export.

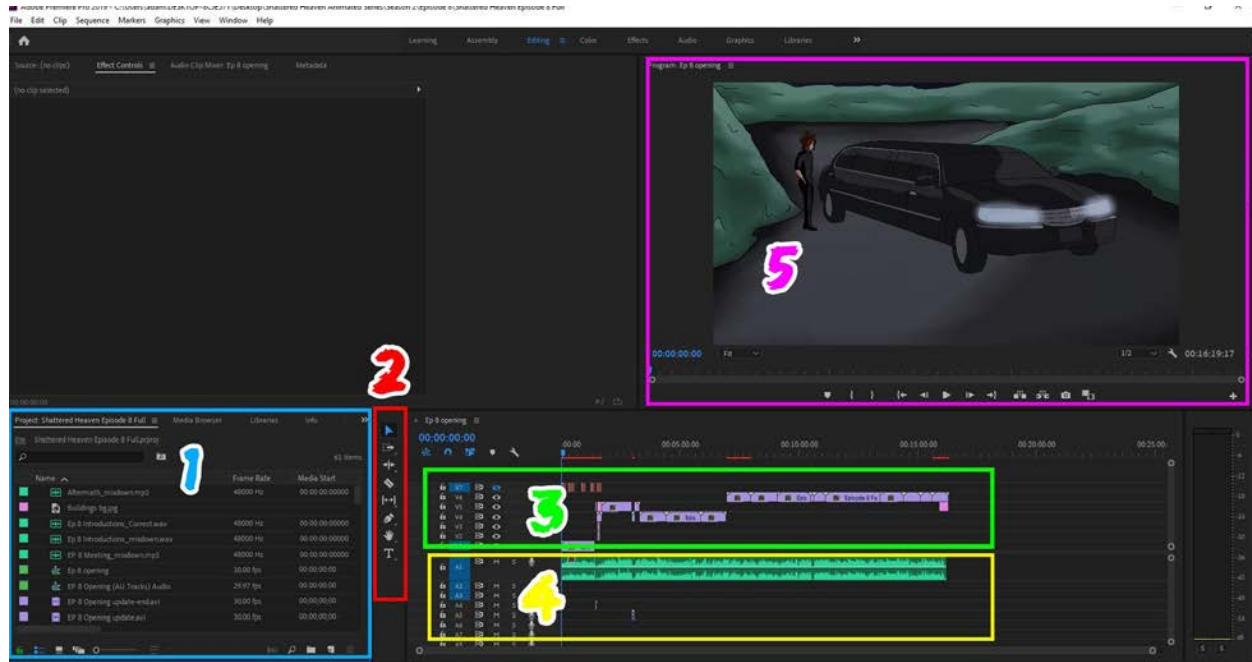


Once you render your cleaned up animation into a video file, you're all set! Congratulations, you finished your first scene of your project! Now rinse and repeat until you have the full episode in a cleaned up video format!

## **6: Full Episode Render sans audio**

With your entire episode rendered split into different videos, it's time to merge them all together. For this you'll need a proper video editing program. I used Premiere Pro, for this guide we'll be using that. You just need a program that will let you put clips together.

## Adobe Premiere Pro Overview



Setup layouts will differ but I'll go over a very brief and basic layout within Premiere Pro. Only going to be going over the basic tools you'll need to know.

**1 Project Files:** All of your project's required assets will be here. This is essentially your "Library" from Flash/Animate.

**2 Tools:** Since we're just using Premiere for simply combining your animation scenes you'll only really need to be familiar with 2 of them here. The top Arrow which is the move tool. This tool does exactly what it says it does, it lets you move individual video and audio clips along the timeline (3 & 4). The razor icon (cut tool), this allows you to cut up video and audio clips if you need to remove or rearrange some visual and audio moments.

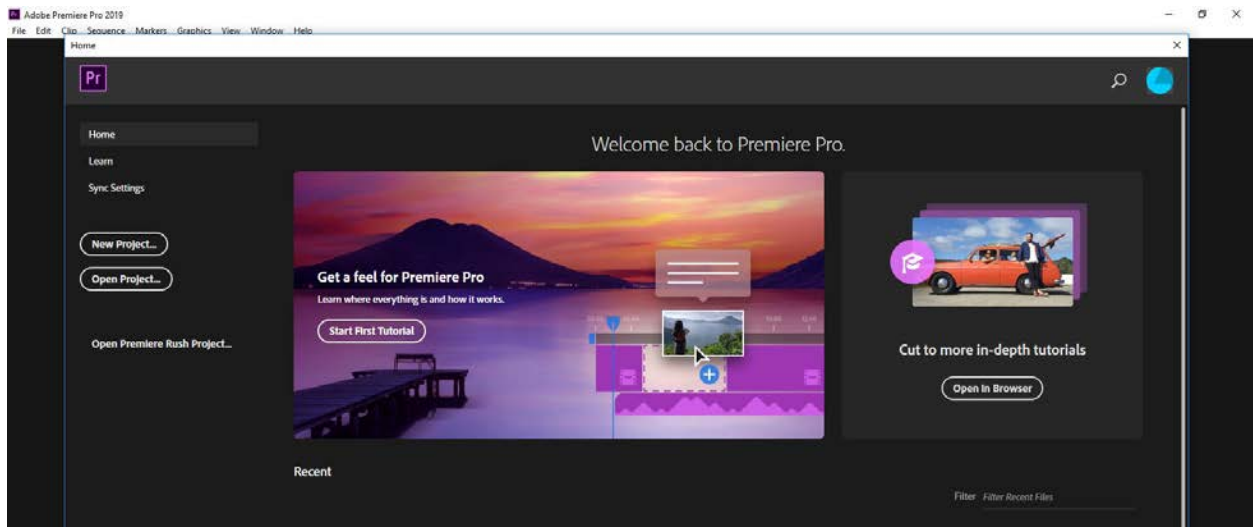
**3 Video/Visual Timeline:** All video files will be shown here while the audio from them will be separated to the bottom timeline. Any graphic, images etc that you may want to add to the video will be placed in this timeline.

**4 Audio Timeline:** As stated above, all audio files are placed here.

## New Video Project File in Premiere

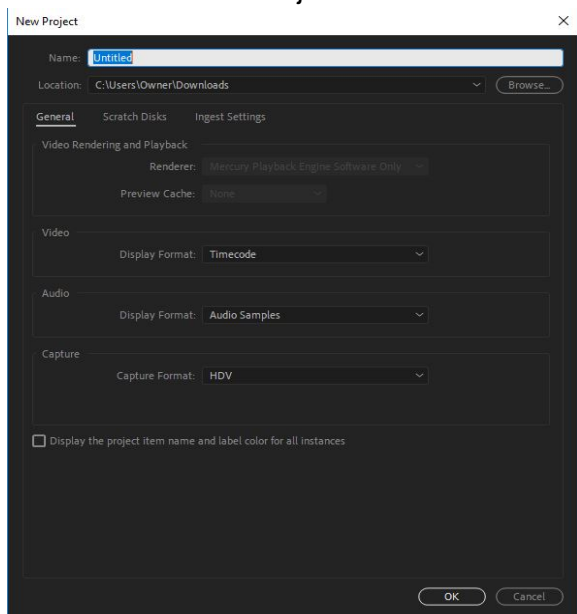
There's a ton of video format options available. If you have little to no experience editing videos then this can get overwhelming. We're sticking generally with Youtube H.264 (mp4) format since it's essentially the most universally accepted for online distribution.

When you first boot up Premiere Pro you'll be greeted with a general Home screen.



From here you can create a New Project, Open a Project or select from a list of Recently worked on projects.

This will be a New Project.

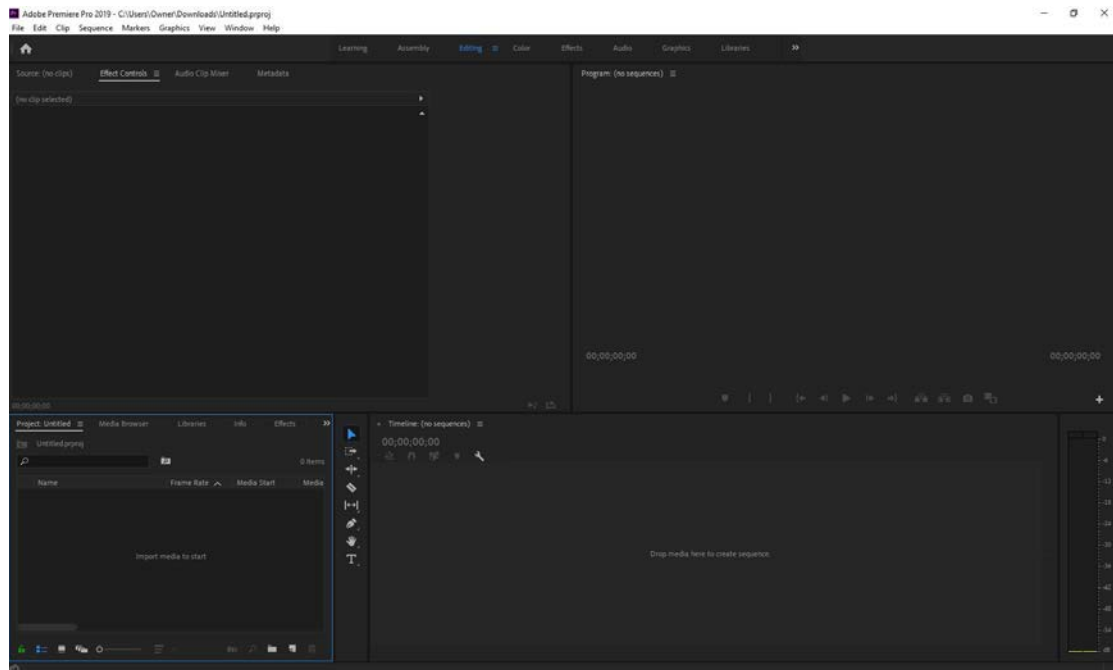


**Name:** Pretty straightforward, give your project file a name.

**Location:** Where your project file is saved.



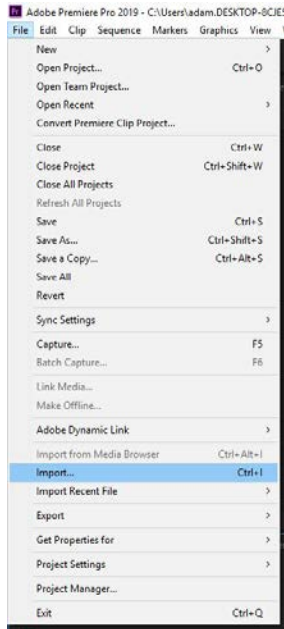
For this type of project you don't have to worry about the tabs - General | Scratch Disks | Ingest Settings. Premiere used to bombard you with a lot of options from the start but the program's been more streamlined. Just hit okay.



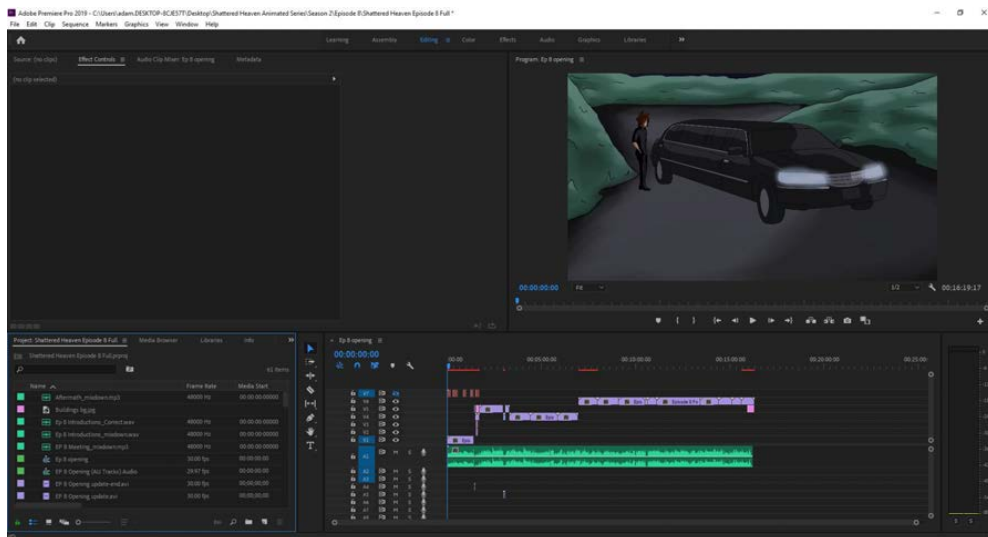
Upon creating your new Project file you're given a whole lot of nothing. Let's fix that and import your separated animated video files.

## Importing Files

Files > Import or you can just drag and drop files into the Project File bin.



Once you import all your necessary files into Premiere it gets relatively simple. Just drag each video file and drop them into the Premiere timeline. Videos will be shown in the top part of the timeline.

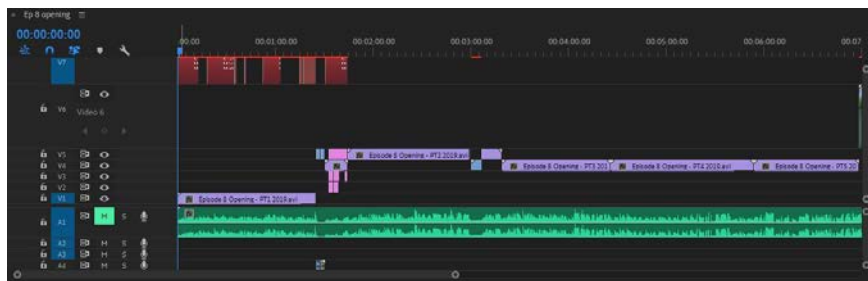
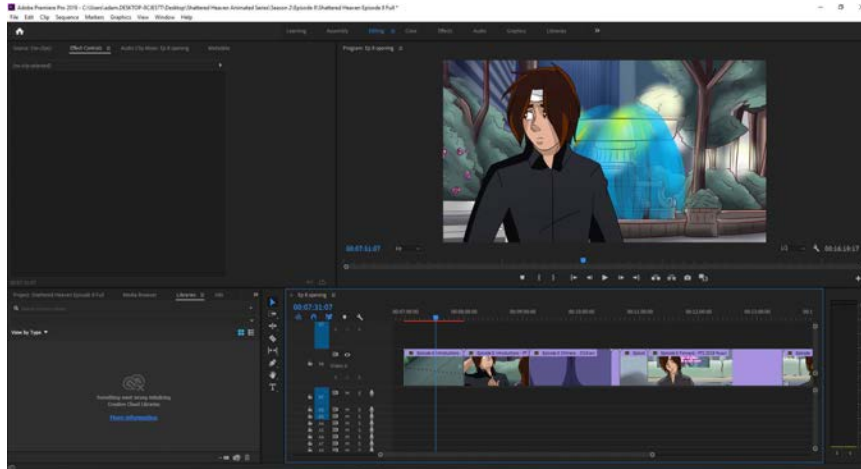


Above is a full episode of Shattered Heaven ready to render.

The episode is broken up into multiple clips. You'll notice that not every clip is the same length, that's just because individually some are longer in time than others. There are some really thin

clips sliced up, those are from other types of graphics that weren't part of the animated renders and were added specifically in Premiere.

Below is a zoomed in section of 2 different scenes. When you zoom in on the timeline in Premiere, video clips will have thumbnails that represents the initial image of the video.

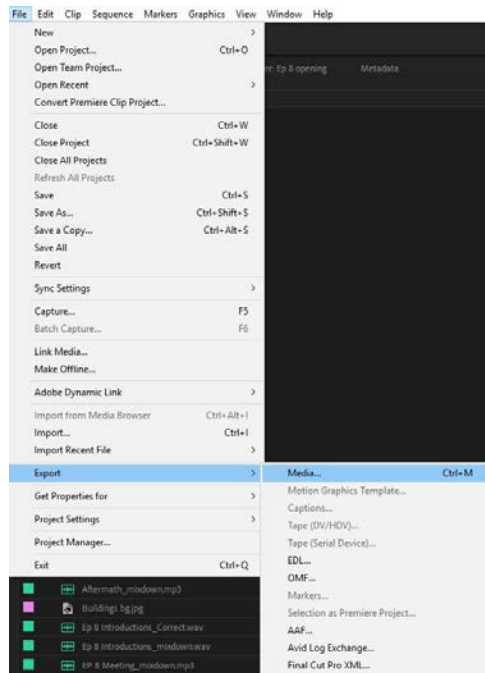


Honestly, this part is really simple and there's not a lot that really needs to be covered. You can experiment with Video effects like transitions, movement, opacity etc on your own time. But to get things going, this is all you really need to know.

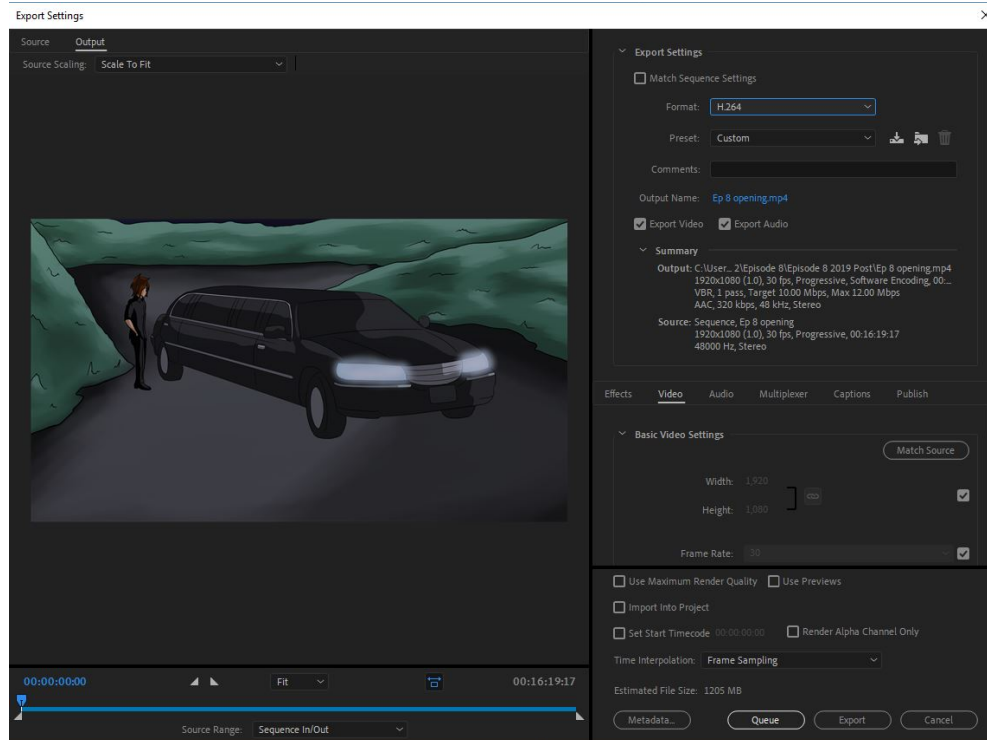
Once your scenes are in proper sequential order, it's time to render a video reference file for final audio work.

## Exporting your file

File > Export > Media or (Ctrl + M)



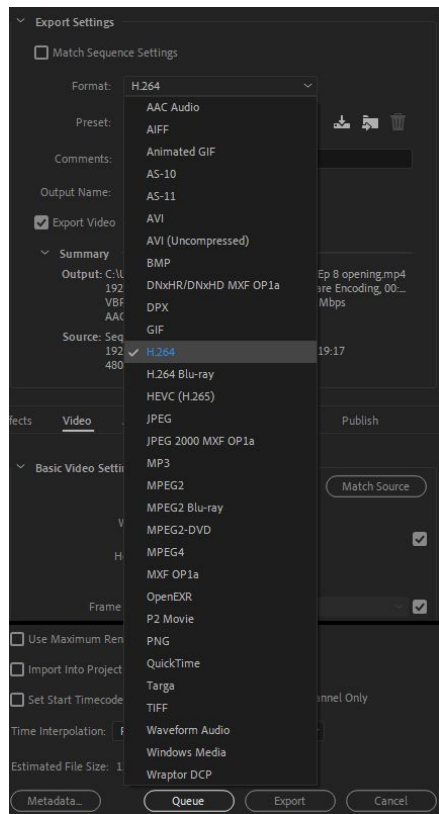
After you select Export > Media , you're brought to a proper Export Settings window. Here's where things can feel a bit overwhelming. So I'll make things easier and tell you what to select.



On the left you have a preview window and a scrollable bar below it to let you go through your render.

On the right is the Export Settings. Here you can change the format of the video that will be exported, what type of video file, etc.

Since this is meant to be a video reference file, uncheck “Export Audio”. This file doesn’t need to have any audio. You’ll be adding and balancing the audio in Adobe Audition.

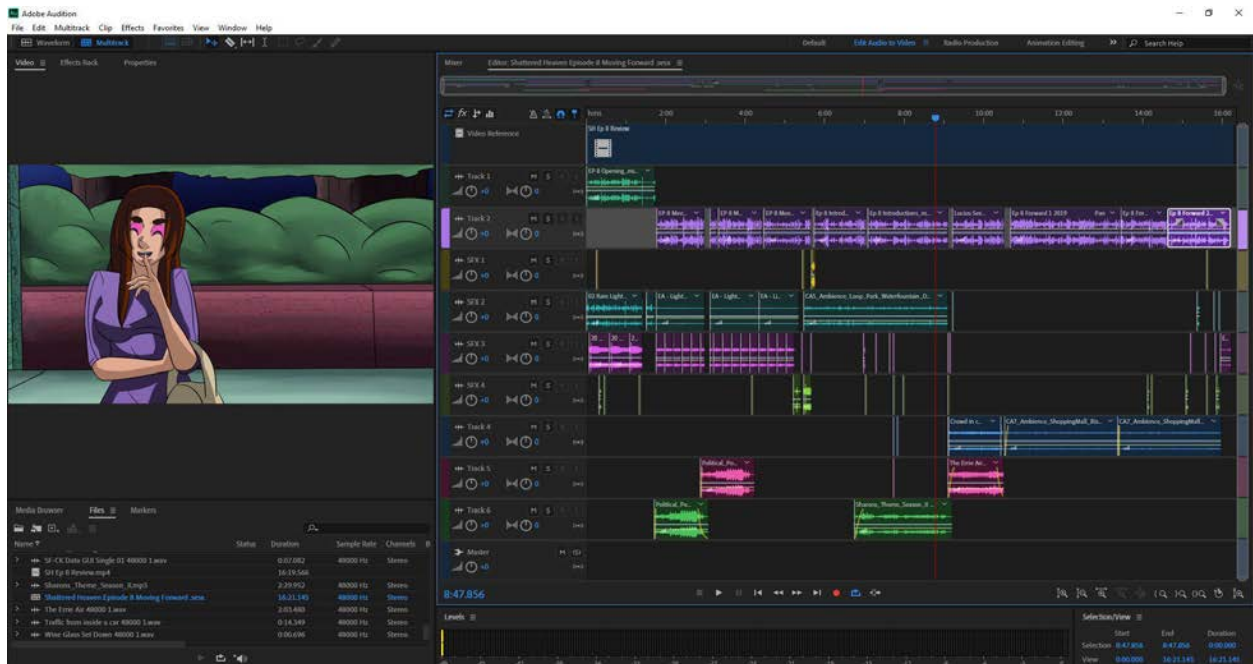


For this, we're sticking with standard Youtube mp4 which is H.264  
You don't have to worry about anything else, the dimensions will match what your video files were. So as long as you made each document the same throughout the animation process, they'll all match perfectly.

Hit Export and then wait for the render to complete.

Now it's time to return to Adobe Audition for a final pass on the episode's audio.

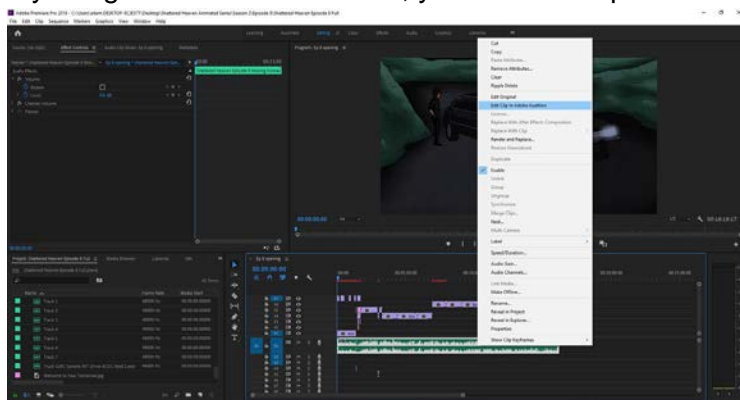
## 7 Audio/Sound Design based on Full Episode Render



Since you've already worked in Audition to create the audio mixdown tracks that were used to make your animatics, you should have a basic understanding of how the program works. Much like Premiere before this step, this is merely a matter of dropping in clips and arranging them. In the Premiere step you saw what the Audio Timeline looked like, it's possible to add your audio in Premiere, it's just a very uncomfortable and inefficient process. Basically, it sucks, do it here. Audition's Timeline is strictly audio so there's a lot more room to play. The tracks are easier to manage and editing the audio overall is efficient.

### Footnote about Premiere and Audio

If you right click an audio track, you have the option to “Edit in Adobe Audition”



This is a form of Dynamic Linking in Adobe Productions.

## **What is Dynamic Linking?**

Simply it's when programs in Adobe are linked and work together directly.

When you select "Edit in Adobe Audition" the audio file opens in Audition. There it's treated like a single file and you can adjust it, add effects, raise/lower the volume etc. Once you save that file in Audition, the file in Premiere's Timeline is automatically updated to reflect the changes.

## **Back to Audition**

First you want to create a new Multitrack session. This was discussed in Step 3 ***"Mixing Voice Overs to Create Mixdowns for Animation"***.

You'll want to bring in the highest quality mixdown of your scenes in to the Files section. These should be in "Wav" format. Reminder, for animatics and reference audio, you used the compressed "Mp3" format. But for the final render of the episode, you want your audio to be the highest quality it can be before rendering.

## **Bringing in your Full Episode Reference Video**

This is easy- drag the file into the Audition Multitrack Timeline. Audition will automatically create a "Video Reference" Track.

***Note- You can only have 1 video reference per session. This is why it's important that you have the FULL episode rendered.***

## **Placing your Audio**

From here it's basically the same as you what you did in Step 3. Drag and drop your specific scene audio mixdowns onto the timeline in chronological order. As long as you didn't change timing in the animation without referencing your audio, they should all line up and match.

## **Sound Effects**

Ideally you want to use royalty free SFX or even create your own. Sound Design/Effects packs can get expensive, but the quality is well worth it.

I personally have an Audio Engineer, so I share their SFX library most of the time. I do have my own for basic things, but my pool is limited.

I often used SoundSnap - <https://www.soundsnap.com/>

They have different pricing tiers which you can check out.

You can google search for different places to download royalty free SFX.



## Balancing Audio/Leveling

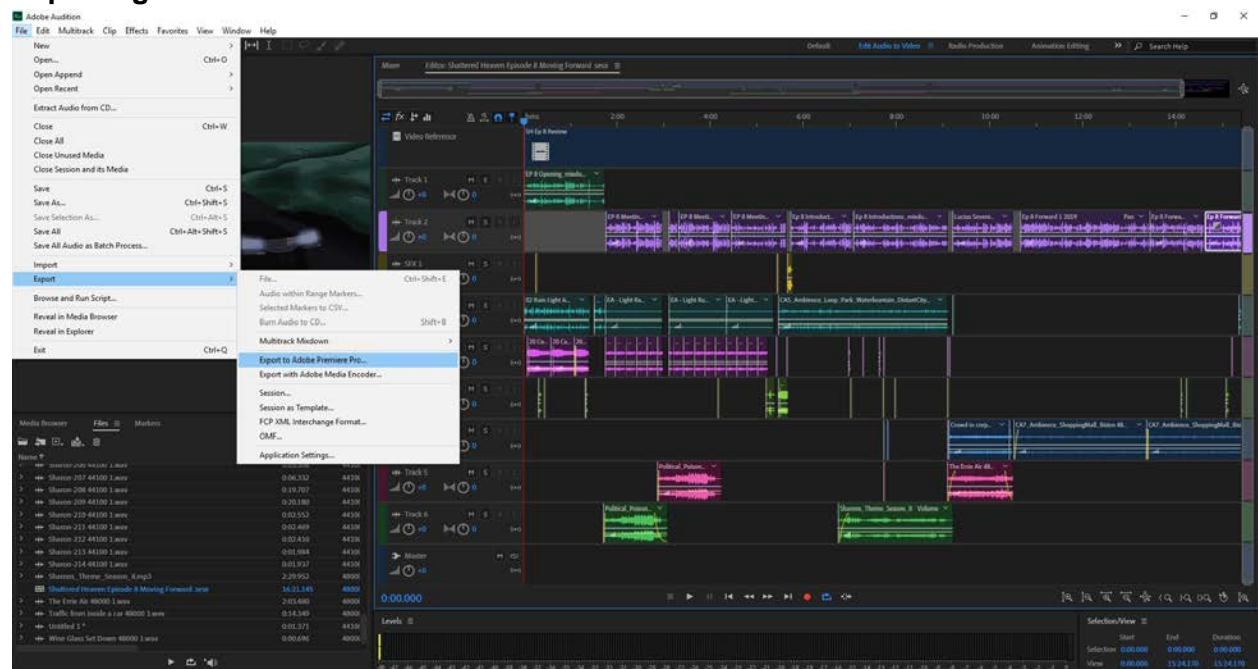
There's a lot of nuance when it comes to this so this may be saved for a future guide that'll focus primarily on Audio Engineering. But the basics is that you want to make sure your SFX and/or music tracks don't drown out your VO dialogue. Play around with leveling, normalizing to see what works.

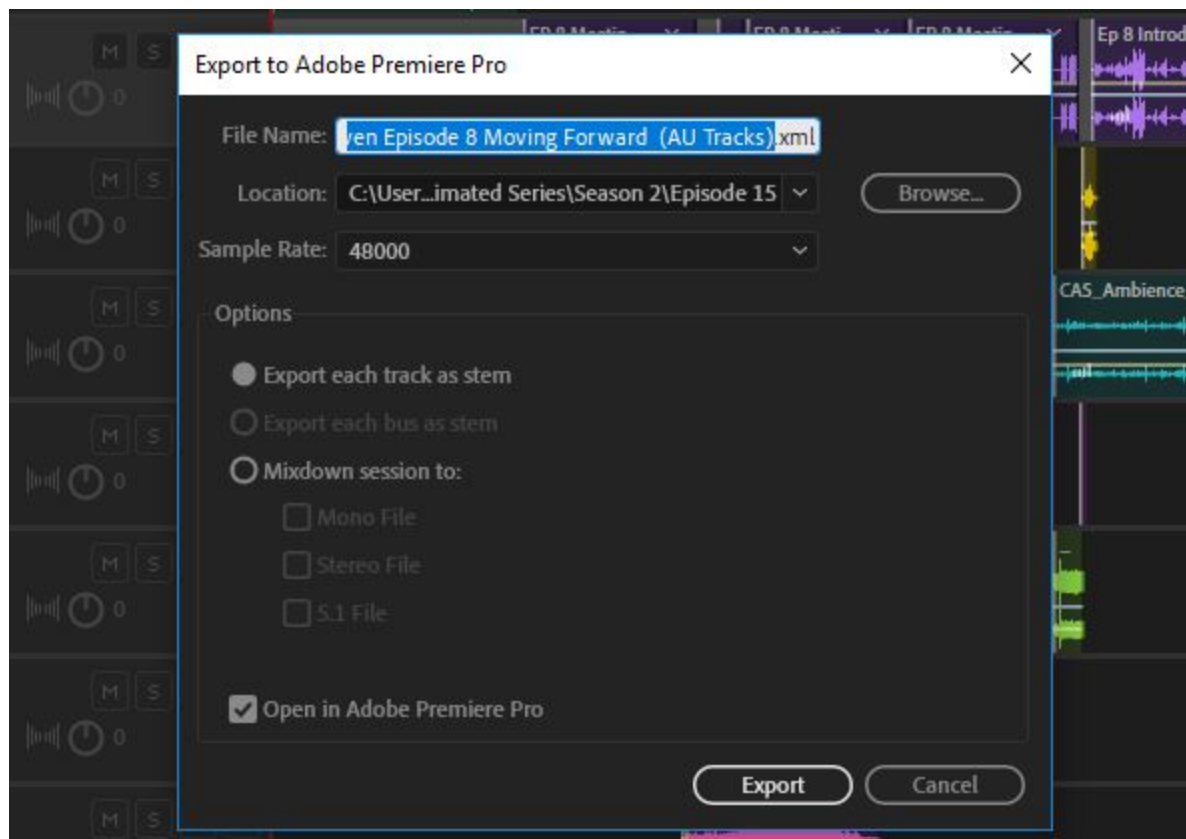
## Exporting your final Audio

When you're satisfied that your new Audio, SFX and Music tracks are set, it's time to export the Final episode mixdown.

You can either simply export the mixdown to its own Wav file or you can export the tracks to an XML file for Premiere Pro. Whichever you do is entirely up to you. The easiest would be to just export the full session mixdown to a wav file and then bring that wav file into Premiere.

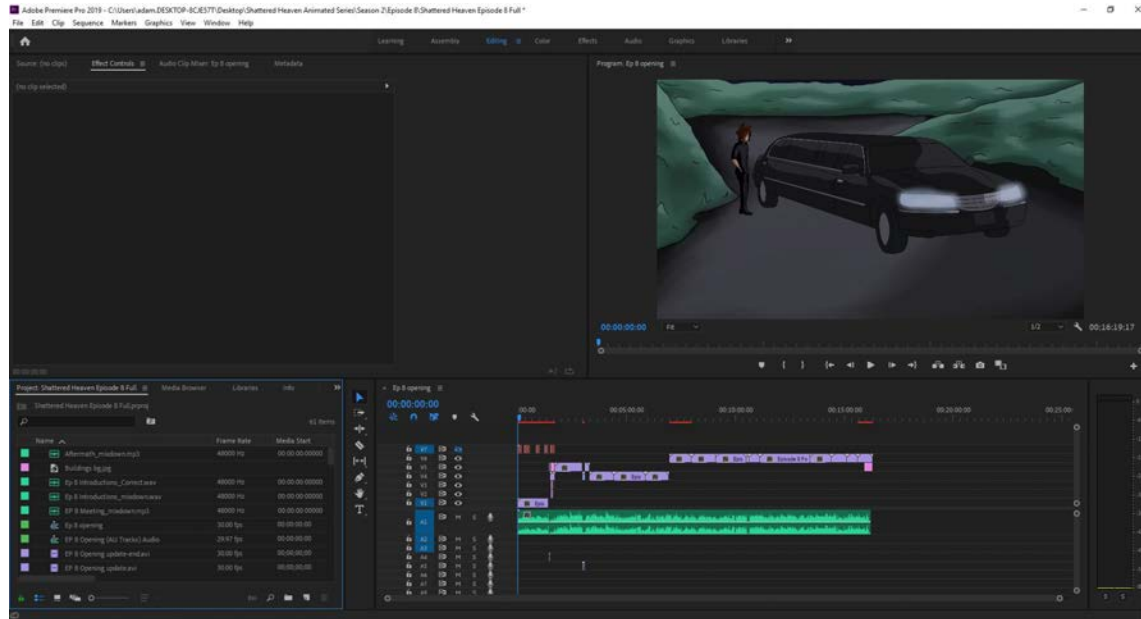
## Exporting Audition Tracks for Premiere Pro





## 8 Final Episode Render with new polished Audio Track

This will be relatively short. This step is essentially just Step 6 ***Full Episode Render sans audio***



***Note- In the above photo there's 2 other audio tracks, they're just unique inserts that came after the episode was animated.***

Open your Episode project file. Drag/Import your final audio mixdown file into the timeline. Now there should be a single audio track that is the length of the full episode.

Once your audio track is lined up, export the video for the final time. Make sure "Export to Audio" is checked in this time.

***Congratulations! You've completed your first ever Episode! Now start the next one!***



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