Your Script for Writing Flawlessly With Avid's Paint Effect
By Marianne Post, Certified Instructor

Mouse writing rivals the readability of a doctor's script pad. The scrawled scribble is often illegible.

Here's how to remedy bad mouse writing by combining an alpha channel with Avid's Paint effect.

Step 1: Create a title or import a text graphic with an alpha channel.

Tip: For fast results, choose a fluid typeface that can be traced in the fewest strokes. A quick Google search for "script fonts" generates a list of several sites with script typefaces.

Creating an alpha channel from scanned cursive writing works too.

Step 2: In the timeline edit a three-layer composite with the same background video on both V1 and V3. Add the text to V2. **[Figure 1]**

Step 3: Apply the Paint effect (Image Category) to V3 and activate the monitor for V2.

Step 4: Go into Effect Mode. Select the brush tool and adjust the brush size setting. Also, select a hue from the color parameter pane. **[Figure 2]**

Hint: You can tweak brush parameters after you create the paint object.

Step 5: Trace the text. Because each stroke must be keyframed independently, try to paint fluidly without releasing the mouse.

Step 6: Exit Effect Mode, and select the red Lift/Overwrite segment mode tool. Double-click the text track (V2) in the Timeline. This expands the nested Matte and Fill layers.

Step 7: Click the Paint effect clip on V3. Drag and drop it to the text's Fill layer. Hold the command-option (control-alt) keys to constrain the segment's vertical movement. This action replaces the text's original fill color with the Paint effect layer. **[Figure 3]**

Step 8: Re-enter Effect Mode and use the Reshape tool to adjust the brush stroke(s). If necessary, tweak the Brush parameter in the Effect Editor. **[Figure 4]**

Tip: If you can't adjust the paint parameters, click the paint object in the Composer window.

Step 9: The Path parameter in the Brush group controls the mouse-writing's animation. Select just the first keyframe and use the Selection tool to select all the brush strokes in the Composer window. Set the Path to 0.

Step 10: Add a keyframe at the point in time the animation should be complete and set Path to 100. Add and adjust additional keyframes to animate multiple brush strokes. **[Figure 5]**

Prognosis: Poor mouse writing is cured. Follow up by mixing this effect with other design inspiration.