

CENTERLINE

The Intelligent Skeleton Extraction Engine for After Effects

USER GUIDE & DOCUMENTATION Version 1.0.0

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Table of Contents

1. Introduction
 2. Installation Guide
 3. Quick Start Guide
 4. Parameter Reference
 5. Advanced Workflows
 6. Troubleshooting & Support
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1. Introduction

CenterLine is an advanced After Effects plugin that automatically extracts the skeleton (centerline) of any rasterized layer—text, logos, handwriting, or illustrations—and renders it as a smooth, animated stroke. Instead of manually drawing paths or using Auto-Trace, CenterLine finds the exact center path of your artwork in one click, providing full control over styling and animation.

2. Installation & Registration

INSTALLATION

The easiest way to install and license is by using the **aescripts + aeplugins manager app**. Download the manager app at: aescripts.com/learn/aescripts-aeplugins-manager-app/ To install a trial you can select 'Add Trial' from the 'Account' menu.

Manual Installation:

1. **Close After Effects.**
2. **Copy the plugin to your AE Plug-ins folder:**
 - **Windows:** `C:\Program Files\Adobe\Adobe After Effects [version]\Support Files\Plug-ins\CenterLine.aex`
 - **macOS:** `/Library/Application Support/Adobe/Common/Plug-ins/7.0/MediaCore/CenterLine.plugin`
3. **Restart After Effects.**
4. **Find CenterLine under Effect > Gizmos > CenterLine.**

REGISTRATION

1. Apply **CenterLine** to any layer.
2. Click "**Register**" in the Effect Controls panel.
3. Enter your license code and click "**Activate**".

3. Quick Start Guide (5 Steps)

1. **Prepare your layer:** Pre-compose your text or logo. White artwork on a black background (or transparent) works best.
2. **Apply the effect:** Select your pre-comp and go to **Effect > Gizmos > CenterLine**.

3. **Set the threshold:** Adjust the **Threshold** slider until the skeleton looks clean and connected.
4. **Style the stroke:** Set your line color and width. Enable **Match Original Width** to follow the artwork's weight.
5. **Animate the reveal:** Keyframe **Reveal Progress** from 0 to 100 for a perfect write-on animation.

4. Parameter Reference

Source & Cleanup

- **Threshold:** Controls the boundary between foreground and background.
- **Gap Close:** Stitches broken chain segments together.
- **Min Chain Length:** Prunes tiny noise lines and artifacts.
- **Use Bezier:** Fits smooth cubic curves to the skeleton for a vector-like look.

Output Style

- **Match Original Width:** Automatically reads and applies the original stroke thickness.
- **Taper:** Adds a natural taper to the tips of each stroke.
- **Reveal Original Image:** Uses the skeleton as a “window” to paint the original source pixels.

Animation

- **Reveal Progress:** The main 0–100% write-on parameter.
- **Stagger:** Controls if multiple paths reveal sequentially or simultaneously.
- **Path Offset:** Shifts the reveal window—perfect for looping dash effects.

5. Advanced Workflows

Merge Operations

If a letter or logo is split into multiple fragments:

1. Enable **Preview Chains** to see the numbered labels.
2. Select the chains you want to join.
3. Click **Blend Selected Chains** to permanently merge them into one continuous stroke.

Export to Shape Layer

Convert your skeleton into a fully-animated AE Shape Layer:

1. Preview at least one frame to populate the cache.
2. Click **Create Shape Layer** in the Export group.
3. Configure smoothness and duration in the dialog.
4. CenterLine will generate a new Shape Layer with **Trim Path** keyframes already applied.

Particle Spark Effect

1. Enable **Particles** and **Tip Mode**.
2. Set a **Tip Window** (e.g., 60px) and choose a spark color.
3. As you animate **Reveal Progress**, particles will travel with the drawing tip.

6. Troubleshooting & Support

Common Issues

Issue	Solution
No skeleton visible	Check your Threshold. If artwork is black on white, enable Invert Input .
Jagged paths	Enable Use Bezier and increase Smoothing Passes .
Broken strokes	Lower the Threshold or increase the Gap Close value.
Drawing backwards	Use the Reverse Selected Chain button or move the Start Point crosshair.

Credits & Contact

CenterLine was designed and developed by:

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For support, feature requests, or to view more tools, please visit:

- **Website:** othmanahmed.online
- **Portfolio:** [Othman Ahmed's Behance](#)

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