EARNEDITS

Editor Reference Guide

AI + After Effects Workflow — Tools, Techniques & Editor Task

1 Workflow Overview

Every visual in a project is built using a mix of AI generation and manual After Effects craft. AI provides the raw visual material; your editing skill — animation, layering, timing, color — is what makes the final result look sharp. Know both when to use AI, and when to build something by hand instead (e.g. text-heavy visuals like newspaper articles are more accurate when built manually).

2 AI Tools — Different Use Cases

Other tools like Gemini and similar AI models can work too — these are just the ones used personally and recommended below.

Use case	AI tool	Notes
Primary image generation	Midjourney	First choice — try this before switching tools.
Backup / alternate style	ChatGPT (image gen)	Switch here if Midjourney isn't nailing the look.
Splitting merged elements in a generated image (e.g. overlapping hands)	Photoshop AI Markup + Gemini 2.5 (Nano Banana)	Prompt used: "Separate each hand, cut out, keep it easy."
Prompt writing from a reference image	Claude	Ask it to convert a Pinterest/reference image into a detailed Midjourney-ready prompt.
Text-accurate visuals (articles, documents, spelling-critical content)	Claude (doc/SVG output)	Don't use image generators for text — they get spelling wrong. Build these manually in After Effects instead.

3 Slow Motion Camera Technique (via Null Layer)

- Always control the camera using a null layer — never animate the camera directly.
- Add a position keyframe at the start of the motion, and one at the end.
- Add a third keyframe just before the final one, then drag that third keyframe back close to the start (2–3 frames after the first keyframe).
- Result: the motion starts fast, then eases into smooth slow motion for the rest of the move.
- To slow the motion down further, drag the final keyframe out further (e.g. 6–8 seconds instead of 2–3).
- Always apply Easy Ease and fine-tune the curve in the Graph Editor — this is what removes mechanical, robotic motion.
- For multi-part camera moves, chain multiple null layers and start each new motion just before the previous one ends — this overlap removes any dead stop between movements.

4 Plugins Used

Plugin	Used for	Link
Flex GUI Pro	Splitting a masked image into individual separated layers automatically (e.g. overlapping hand shapes) instead of doing it manually layer by layer.	captureflex.in ↗
Boris FX Continuum (BCC)	Effects like BCC HexTile / Halftone — used for building textured, grainy backgrounds.	borisfx.com ↗
Shadow Studio 3	Adds realistic cast shadows for extra depth on 3D camera + shape layer scenes.	aescripts.com ↗

5 Free Textures

Used for paper-texture text effects, grain overlays, and background textures across multiple scenes (e.g. the newspaper article scene).

texturelabs.org ↗

6 Text Animations

Reference presets/project file for the text animation techniques used across tutorials (e.g. flicker reveals, staggered text entrances).

Google Drive folder ↗

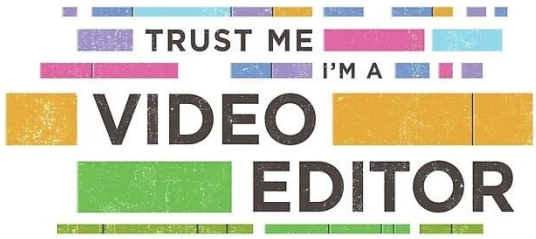
7 Reference Images

Pinterest inspiration board — these are the references pulled for building out scene concepts, layouts, and typography styles.

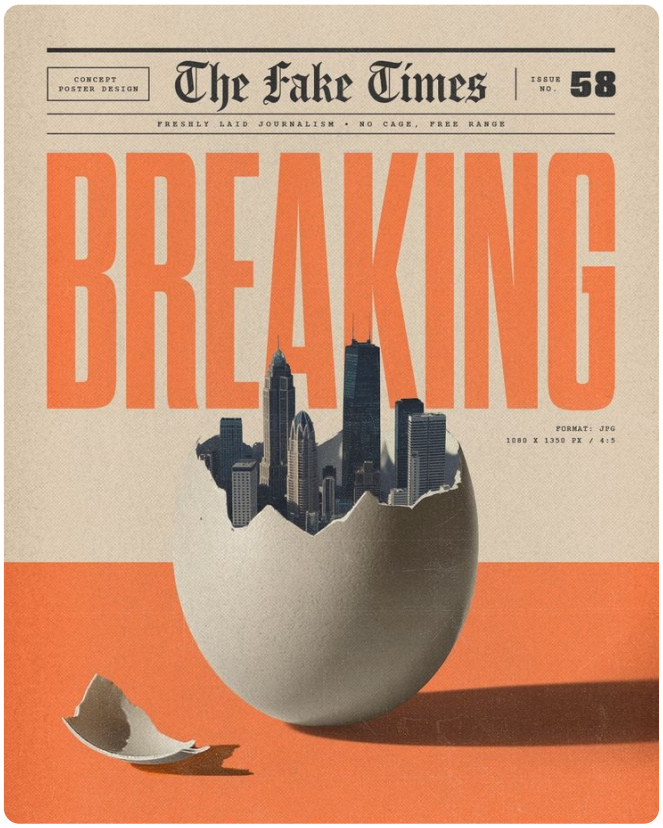
📌 Pinterest Board



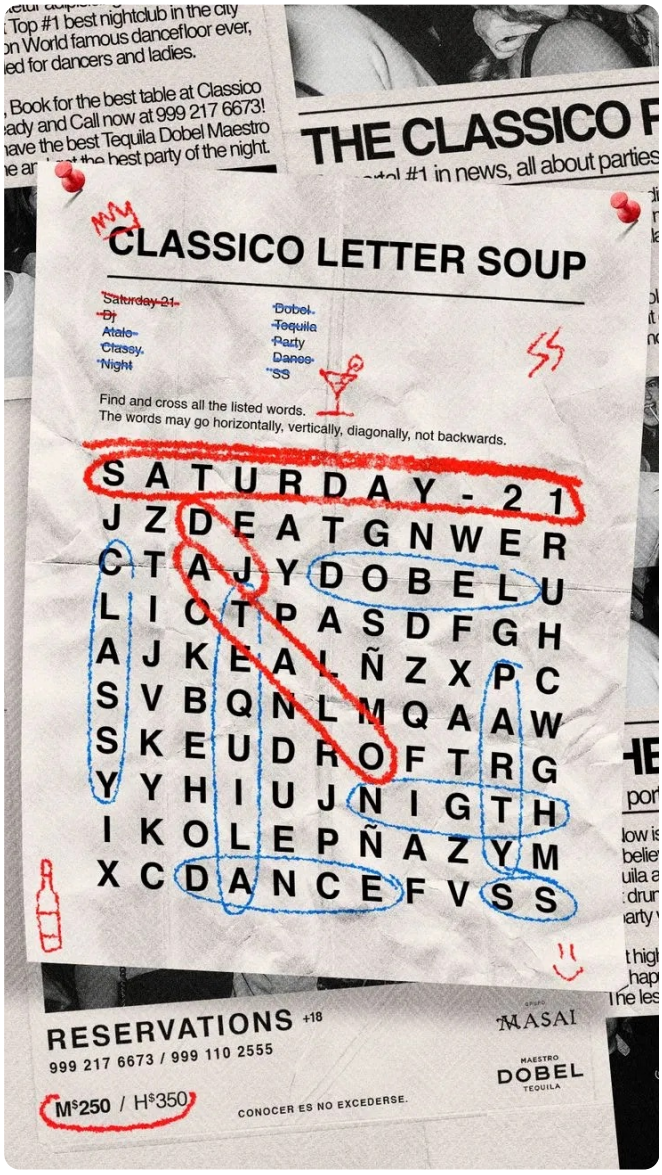
Bold poster typography + trophy composition reference



Flat color text-block layout reference



Newspaper / "Breaking" cover reference — used for the cracked-egg newspaper scene



Word-search / crossword layout reference — used for the crossword scene

8 AI-Generated Outputs

Final AI-generated images used directly in the edit — shown separately from the Pinterest references above, since these are finished outputs rather than inspiration.

AI-Generated Outputs



Hands reaching upward — used as a hero/background visual



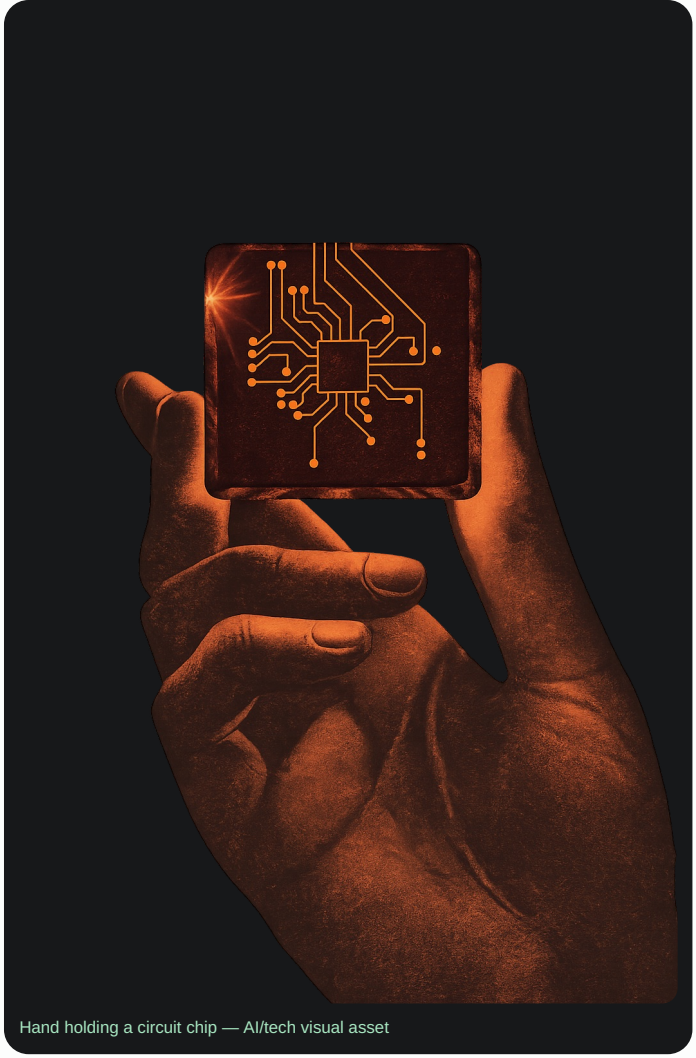
Claude-generated word-search grid — crossword scene output



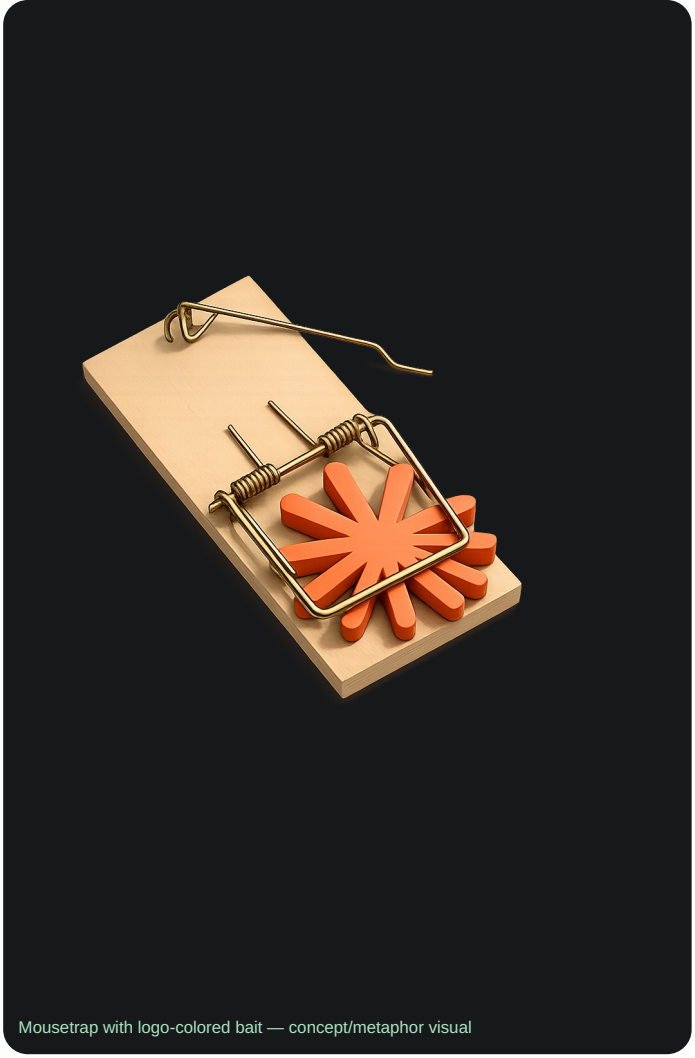
Hand holding blank wooden board — "Banned" scene output (Midjourney)



Rocket render — Fable 5 rocket scene output (Midjourney)



Hand holding a circuit chip — AI/tech visual asset



Mousetrap with logo-colored bait — concept/metaphor visual



Generated portrait — used for the talking-head animation example

9 Task for Editors

Using the reference image below, recreate a similar folder/file-style layout using AI, then animate it in After Effects.



Prompts to use (tweak these as needed to fit your specific style/result):

1st — Full file with a face on it

> *"Generate high quality image of full file without crop having face on with no background."*

2nd — Empty file only (if you want to add different things on the file yourself)

> *"Generate high quality image of one full file without crop with no background."*

3rd — Table

> *"Generate a high quality image of the table using the reference with no files and text on it, without the light effect."*

- From this, you'll get separate file and table elements.
- Animate them in slowly in After Effects — use the slow motion technique above.
- Lighting: figure it out yourself for now — the next tutorial covers how to build this lighting effect.
- Once your final video is done, send it to me on Patreon via DM, or post it to your story and tag @earnedits for review.