MaskMotion

v1.0.0

Animate every masked region independently — without duplicating layers.

A native C++ After Effects plugin by **Discribe Studio**

— THE PROBLEM

When you want to animate 8 masked parts of an image in After Effects, the traditional workflow forces you to duplicate the layer 8 times. Your timeline becomes cluttered, renders slow down, and making global changes becomes painful.

> **8 masks should not mean 8 layers.**

— THE SOLUTION

MaskMotion is a native C++ After Effects plugin that lets you animate each masked region independently — all from a single layer. Apply the effect, assign your masks to regions, and animate Position, Anchor, Scale, Rotation, and Opacity per region. Your timeline stays clean.

— INSTALLATION

The easiest way to install and license is by using the aescripts + aeplugins manager. To install a trial you can select 'Add Trial' from the 'Account' menu.

Manual Install Windows

Copy MaskMotion.aex to your After Effects Plug-ins folder and restart After Effects.
C:\Program Files\Adobe\Adobe After Effects <version>\Support Files\Plug-ins\

Manual Install macOS

Copy MaskMotion.plugin to your After Effects Plug-ins folder and restart After Effects.
/Applications/Adobe After Effects <version>/Plug-ins/

After installation, find MaskMotion in Effect > Discribe > MaskMotion

— FEATURES

Core Capabilities

- Up to 8 independent regions per effect instance
- Each region maps to one of your layer's existing masks
- Automatic mask name detection — region dropdowns update automatically to match your mask names
- Full keyframe animation support on all transform parameters
- Supports 8-bit, 16-bit, and 32-bit per channel color depth
- Supports Multi-Frame Rendering (MFR)
- Supports Smart Render — uses pre-render data for stable, correct output

Per-Region Transform Controls

Control	Description
Enable	Toggle the region on or off without losing settings
Mask	Select which layer mask this region uses
Position	Move the region in X and Y (in pixels)
Anchor Offset	Shift the transform anchor relative to the mask center
Link Scale X/Y	Toggle between uniform scale and independent axis control
Scale	Uniform scale percentage
Scale X / Scale Y	Independent axis scale (available when Link is off)
Rotation	Rotation in degrees around the anchor point
Opacity	Opacity percentage for this region

Composite Modes

Mode	Description
Over Original	Transformed regions composite on top of the original layer
Cut Original Region	Original masked area is removed; replaced by the transformed version
Regions Only	Only the transformed regions are visible; original layer is hidden

Quality Modes

Mode	Description
Draft	Fast preview — bilinear sampling
Normal	Balanced quality for standard work

Mode	Description
High	High-quality sampling for final renders

Stability & Safety

- Handles deleted or renamed masks safely — no crashes
- Handles invalid mask references gracefully
- Handles reordered masks without breaking existing settings
- Reads all parameters through After Effects checkout APIs for correctness during Smart Render
- Anchor point defaults to the centroid (center) of the selected mask automatically
- Regions with no valid mask assigned are skipped silently

— SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS

Windows

- After Effects 2022 (22.0) or later
- Windows 10 / 11 (64-bit)

macOS

- After Effects 2022 (22.0) or later
- macOS 11 (Big Sur) or later
- Universal Binary — runs natively on both Apple Silicon (M1/M2/M3) and Intel

— QUICK START

1. Draw your masks on a layer and name them (e.g. Head, Left Hand, Eyes, Body)
2. Apply Effect > Discribe > MaskMotion to the layer
3. For each Region, select the corresponding mask from the dropdown — mask names appear automatically
4. Adjust Position, Scale, Rotation, and Opacity per region
5. Set keyframes and animate

PARAMETERS REFERENCE

Global Parameters

Parameter	Description
Composite Mode	How transformed regions composite with the original layer
Quality	Render quality — use Draft for previews, High for final output

Per Region Parameters (Regions 1–8)

Parameter	Default	Description
Enable Region N	On	Toggle region active/inactive
Region N Mask	None	Which layer mask this region uses
Region N Position	0, 0	X/Y offset in pixels from original position
Region N Anchor Offset	0, 0	Shifts the transform pivot relative to the mask center
Link Scale X/Y	On	Uniform scale when on; independent axes when off
Region N Scale	100%	Uniform scale percentage
Region N Scale X	100%	Horizontal scale (when Link is off)
Region N Scale Y	100%	Vertical scale (when Link is off)
Region N Rotation	0°	Rotation around the anchor point
Region N Opacity	100%	Opacity for this region

TIPS

- Name your masks before applying MaskMotion. The plugin reads mask names automatically. If you add the effect first and name masks later, close and reopen the effect controls panel to refresh the dropdowns.
- Anchor Offset is relative to the mask center. 0, 0 always means the centroid of the selected mask — no matter where the mask is in the composition. Moving the offset shifts the pivot for rotation and scale.
- Cut Original Region gives the cleanest result for character animation and product explode workflows — it removes the original area so transformed regions do not overlap it.
- Use Draft quality while animating keyframes and switch to High before exporting.
- If you need more than 8 regions, precompose the layer and apply a second MaskMotion instance.
- Regions with no mask selected do not affect the output — you can safely leave unused regions empty.

— KNOWN LIMITATIONS

- Maximum 8 regions per effect instance.
- Works on raster layers (footage, solids, precomps). Shape layers and text layers are not supported.

- Mask Feather soft-edge blending on transformed regions is not supported in v1.0.0
- Mask Expansion values are not read in v1.0.0
- v1.0.0 is optimized for straight-edged masks such as rectangles, squares, and polygon-style shapes. Curved masks such as circles or ellipses are not currently supported.

— VERSION HISTORY

v1.0.0 — Initial Release

- 8 independent regions with full transform controls (Position, Anchor Offset, Scale, Rotation, Opacity)
- Automatic mask name detection
- Composite modes: Over Original, Cut Original Region, Regions Only
- Quality modes: Draft, Normal, High
- Anchor Point Offset per region (defaults to mask center)
- Full keyframe animation support on all parameters
- Link Scale X/Y toggle per region
- Smart Render and Multi-Frame Rendering support
- 8-bit, 16-bit, and 32-bit color depth support
- Windows (.aex) and macOS Universal Binary (.plugin)

*MaskMotion is developed by **Mehdat Mounier** — Discribe Studio — native C++ tools for After Effects professionals.*