PROJECT FILE NAMING CONVENTIONS:

When working in AE or any other 3D, editing, or animation applications we name files starting with a three letter code for "Client" followed by the "Show" title (or project name), followed by the "Element" (or title), then to keep track of most recent files we use a six digit date starting with year/month/day (150210) next comes the version (V01) and finally the initials of the artist working on the project file. Here is an example of what that looks like.

XXX_ShowTitle_Element_000000_V01_AZ

Here is an example of a NATGEO 30 sec promo called "Crowd Control" (with John Smith as the artist)

NAT_CrowdControl_Promo30_150210_V01_JS

Everyday (or at a major juncture) we duplicate the file and update the date and version number. Here is an example of what that would look like on the second day of the project.

NAT_CrowdControl_Promo30_150210_V01_JS
NAT_CrowdControl_Promo30_150211_V02_JS

The idea here is to make sure you leave a trail just incase you or the client wants to go back to an earlier version of the project. That never happens right? The other important thing to note, is that the most recent file should always be on the bottom if viewing in a chronological order. Here is an example of day 4 with two different artists working on the project. (Welcome artist John Hancock filling in for John Smith while he's out sick, and the client threw him three rounds of feedback or creative direction)

NAT_CrowdControl_Promo30_150210_V01_JS
NAT_CrowdControl_Promo30_150211_V02_JS
NAT_CrowdControl_Promo30_150212_V03_JH
NAT_CrowdControl_Promo30_150212_V04_JH
NAT_CrowdControl_Promo30_150212_V05_JH
NAT_CrowdControl_Promo30_150213_V06_JS
NAT_CrowdControl_Promo30_150213_V07_JS

Using artist initials is also a great way to save a file if you happen to go to an empty workstation and there's an active project still open. To make sure you are not saving over another file or screwing anything up, just use your initials so another artist can inquire with you later or simply disregard.

FILE NAMING CONVENTIONS FOR DELIVERABLES:

If you are working on a project that has multiple deliverables it's always a good idea to keep the names consistent so that if a client or creative director wanted to throw everything into one folder (you know, the random downloads that end up on the desktop) the bottom file would always represent the latest version. In this case we replace the date with length or description of the deliverable, this keeps everything super simple, because we wouldn't want to confuse an editor :) Oh, and we lose the artist initials when it's not an internal file. Here is an example of what that some random previews/deliverables might look like in a folder…

NAT_CrowdControl_BUMP_IN_V01.mov
NAT_CrowdControl_BUMP_OUT_V05.mov
NAT_CrowdControl_OPEN_15_SEC_V01.mov
NAT_CrowdControl_OPEN_15_SEC_V02.mov
NAT_CrowdControl_OPEN_15_SEC_V04.mov
NAT_CrowdControl_OPEN_30_SEC_V01.mov
NAT_CrowdControl_TRAN_01_15FR_V01.mov
NAT_CrowdControl_TRAN_01_15FR_V02.mov
NAT_CrowdControl_TRAN_01_15FR_MATT_V02.mov
NAT_CrowdControl_TRAN_03_20FR_V01.mov

These files would eventually go in sorted folders as final deliverables, but you can quickly see how sending previews with different names could be a big headache for folks trying to keep things organized. Help them help you. You will notice that sometimes the versions jump up in random increments, this is because we often have multiple files or tests that we try and then pick one over the other. As long as the most recent version is the highest number then this method makes sense (just remember to tell your client as well) and don't use the word "FINAL" unless your client absolutely insists on it, because everyone knows it's never final until it airs. One other pitfall, don't start renaming previews or deliverables differently from your comps, things can start to get really confusing, especially if there are multiple artists working on the same project.

Here is a handy list of some acronyms for broadcast package deliverables…

1L	=	ONE LINE
2L	=	TWO LINE
3L	=	THREE LINE
ALPHA	=	ALPHA
BG	=	BACKGROUND
BUMP	=	GRAPHIC GOING INTO OR BACK FROM BREAK
CRED	=	CREDITS
FR	=	FRAME
L3RD	=	LOWER 3RDS
LP	=	LOOP
MATTE	=	MATTE
OPEN	=	OPEN
PIP	=	PICTURE IN PICTURE
SEC	=	SECOND
TRAN	=	TRANSITION