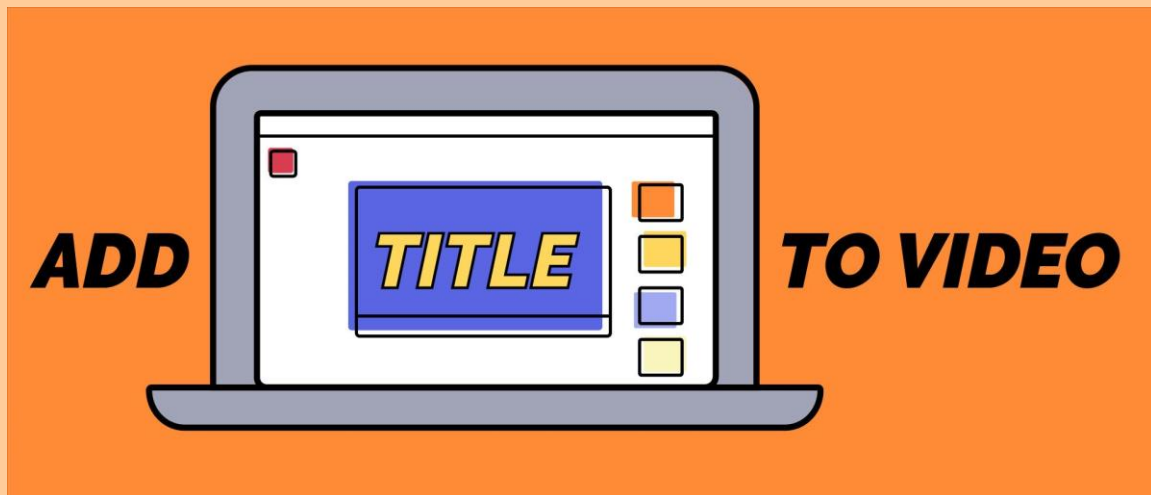


Spruce Up Your Video with Intros, Titles, Captions, and Credits

A picture is worth a thousand words. But sometimes, your video or photo slideshows can benefit from just a bit more. That's where titles, captions and credits come in. Most video editor apps and programs like Windows Live Movie Maker and iMovie allow you to add these textual elements in a snap. It's one of the easiest things to add in most video editing apps and software. You can even give them a professional look and feel by tweaking the font and style and by adding cinematic effects.



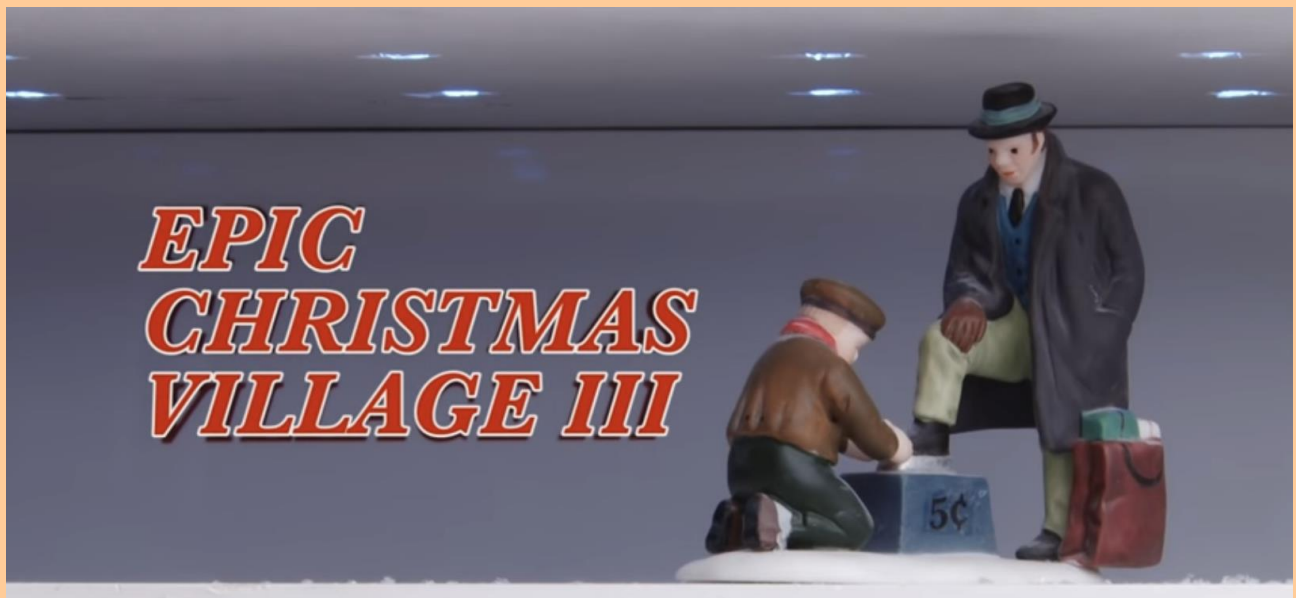
Be sure to check out all the other topnotch and timely columns on TheVillageCollector.com – "*Just So You Know (JSYK)*" musings by David Spears, Larry Treadwell, Brian Vaill's "*The Train Station*," Thea Heyink's video at "*The Creation Station*," "*Phil & Sue's Village*" (stories from England!), and "*Coach is Here*" by webmaster Bill Channell. Please keep visiting the Village Videos page and watch, watch, watch. The 2021 Hall of Fame voting for videos is happening, so vote often (once a day) and vote wisely.

There is a new batch of village videos on the 15th of each month. So many ideas, so little time... and not enough money.

Titles are standalone clips meant to precede a movie. **Credits** are standalone clips meant to follow your movie, or briefly precede the title. **Captions** are text that are superimposed on top of clips or photos. Many village videos add titles as captions near the beginning of the video.

Titles, captions, and credits let you enhance your movie by adding text-based information to your movie. The title plays for the specified amount of time, and then the movie begins.

There are lots of ways to start your video off with a bang. For example, TheBigCrabCake usually shows us something unique or original in the first scene and then fades in a tasteful title text. The title below is what we saw after being wowed by his subway scene.



Another of my favorite video villagers, bosmailman, started using titles in 2014 for his biennial videos. He sets a non-scene with audio – stars, the dark night, snow – and then brings in his title.

Don Wolford, the light extravaganza engineer and Disney enthusiast, had one of the first village videos I saw in 2014 who added to his title with credits to the producers who "Present" the video, just like in the movies at the cinema:

Frozen Christmas Village 2014 (6:25)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SgAHEfi9szA>

Credits play at the beginning and end of nearly every film when you go to the movies as well as many TV shows. The opening credits inform the audience which studios or production companies were involved in making the film, and they run the names of the major stars in the cast.

The most common movie opening credits order is:

1. PRODUCTION COMPANY presents (distributor)
2. a PRODUCTION COMPANY production (producer)
3. a FILMMAKER.
4. Film Title.
5. Lead Cast.
6. Supporting Cast.
7. Casting Director.
8. Music Composer.



Photo by TheBigCrabCake

For our small Christmas village videos, we don't need all that hoopla. But why not spice it up a bit – let the audience know

something good, something produced, and “professional” is coming. Whet their appetite!

Steve F also starts his video in 2015 with credits and title texting against a starry sky like a cinema – in order: Waterloo Road Studios, In Association with Xmas Village Productions, Presents, A Xmas Wonderland:

Steve’s Christmas Village 2015 (10:26)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=17SvtirfZp4&t=3s>

Other early title examples that stand out are (you can just watch the beginning, or stay for the whole video):

Robin Christmas Village 2014 (6:31)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x4xZnooS3Ok>

Christmas Village 2014 (6:32)

Kathryn Riley-Cuglietta

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0tPvDkkMKk8>

Beyond a Title and Credits, you can try **Intros**. Madison Sebastian of Madastiville took Christmas village video title openings to a new cinematic level with his first video in 2015:



Madastiville Christmas Village 2015 (6:47)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VpWBIJTk30M&t=5s>

The lettering comes floating in from the sides in space above our planet and forms his branding.

You can capture your online audience with a show-stopping YouTube intro. Nearly all successful YouTubers use an intro to tell the viewer who/what they are watching and to build brand recognition.

Technically, an intro is the part of the video where you introduce the video, show, or tell what the video is about. This is also called the hook.

Intros are very important to have so your audience knows who you are and can show that you have a brand, are dedicated to your channel and who you are! If your intro doesn't do these three things, it's time to get a new intro.



Photo by Ramon Hoeks

How long should YouTube Intros be? You want to keep it short, ideally around 5 seconds, but certainly no longer than 20 seconds. People expect YouTube content to pull them in quickly,

keep their attention for a few minutes, and then they're on to find the next video.

The best intro of the year in 2018 was done by markskotak:

CHRISTMAS VILLAGE 2018! (4:26)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6jKXkzl1jdg>

One of my favorite "how'd he do dat?" title and ending examples was in a 2016 video by Fred Thomas:

Fred's Christmasvillage 2016 (3:56)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1BzkhYtqfrA>

Because Windows Live Movie Maker has limited capabilities for video titles, I search for video intro templates on-line that I can use in my video. You can customize the text and sometimes the colors in these templates as well as choose music. You can also choose no music and add your own as it plays in your video editor. A video intro is imported into your video the same way as you import one of your video clips, except that it's the very first video clip.



Photo by Joanna Villegas

The internet is full of Intro templates, and many of them have choices which are Christmas themed. These store-bought intros add spice to the video's beginning, and generally last from 10 to 45-seconds. Customized intros cost about as much as a single figurine. Google "YouTube video intros" to see what's possible.

Captions make it easier to catch and keep your audience's attention, as demonstrated by the fact that videos with captions have a longer viewing time. These longer viewing times not only help you get your message across, but they can also make your content perform better on search engines.

Captions have also been found by numerous studies to improve the comprehension of video content, as well as create a positive learning response among students. In a study by the University of South Florida, 99 per cent of students reported that captions were helpful in learning about a topic.



And for viewers whose native language is not English, captions improve comprehension by supporting them to read along while they listen. This means you can broaden your audience to overseas markets and others who have English as a second language, just by using captions.

One of my favorite village video makers, mogas98 from the Netherlands, uses captions liberally to guide us around his detailed "neighborhoods," all while we listen to his unusual 1950's Christmas rock 'n roll songs.

2019 Mogasville the movie (17:41)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GxQSOLow_ho

Here's another great title example with liberal use of captions by Polly Daugherty:

Polly, Cory & Einstein's Christmas Village 2017 (6:28)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XokW8BN1isY&t=219s>

Should you have a YouTube **outro**? A YouTube outro (or end screen) allows you to **better engage viewers by adding a call to action**. You can point them to other videos you've made, prompt them to subscribe to your channel, drive traffic to your website, and more. You can thank your viewers for watching and promise to be back next year or in two years.



My Christmas village videos tend to be on the longish side – I strive for about a 15-minute video. At the end of my 2020 video, I placed a caption that said, "If you made it this far in the video, please say something in the comments." That prompted a

significant rise in the Comments section and allowed me to interact with my channel subscribers and make new “pen pals.”

It's well established that short videos perform better on YouTube. Because 5% of viewers will stop watching videos after one minute and 60% of viewers drop off after two minutes, short videos can boost the amount of people who actually get to the end of your video. ... These videos have ***higher retention rates***, making it more likely to capture the viewer's attention – and for longer.

So, what is the best length for a YouTube video in 2020? The ***ideal length*** for a YouTube video is ***ten minutes***. Generally, videos between seven to 15 minutes perform well on the platform.



Photo by Toshifumi Ogasawara

In my next column on The Village Collector, we're going to go through the steps you will need to create another short one song video, but this time on your PC using the HD Movie Maker Pro software. You can follow along and use your own photos and video clips, and we'll pull a song off your music library. I'll try to do better next time.

Questions, comments and/or suggestions are always welcome.
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