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Your Light Show, Step by Step

How to load the sequence you bought into xLights, add the song, and make it play on **your** house. Written for first-timers. No sequencing experience needed.

⏱ About 30 minutes the first time | 🎶 Works with any layout | 💻 xLights for Windows & Mac



The whole journey at a glance

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Menu names in xLights can shift a little between versions. If something on your screen looks slightly different from this guide, look for the same words close by. Pictures in this guide are simplified drawings, not exact screenshots.

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Before you start

Make sure you have these four things. Ticking them off now saves a lot of head-scratching later.

xLights is installed

xLights is the free program that runs your show. Download it from **xlights.org** if you haven't already. Use a recent version.

Your display is set up

Your own props (roofline, arches, trees...) are already drawn on the **Layout** tab. Building a layout is a one-time job that this guide doesn't cover; the xLights manual and videos explain it.

Your sequence download

The `.zip` file you received after buying. You'll unzip it in Step 1.

The song (you'll buy it in Step 2)

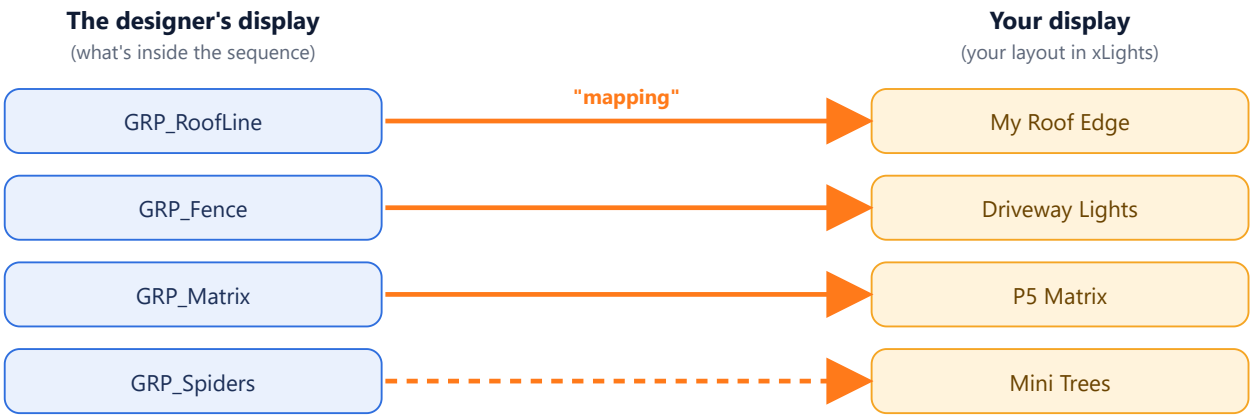
The music is **not** included with the sequence. Music has its own copyright, so you buy the song yourself. It costs about a dollar.

Words you'll see in this guide

Word	What it means, in plain English
Show folder	The one folder on your computer where xLights keeps everything about *your* display: your layout, your controllers, your sequences.
Layout	The map of your display in xLights: every prop, where it sits on the house, and how many lights it has.
Model (or prop)	One thing that lights up: a roofline, an arch, a mega tree, a singing pumpkin.
Group	Several models bundled together so one effect can run across all of them. In these sequences, group names start with `GRP_`.
Sequence (`.xsq`)	The "choreography" file: which lights do what, at which moment of the song.
Effect	One lighting action on a prop, such as a chase, a twinkle, a colour wash or a sweep.
Timing track	Marks that follow the music (beats, bars, verse/chorus, lyrics). They line effects up with the song.
Mapping	Telling xLights which of *your* props should play which part of the designer's show. This is the heart of the whole process (Step 5).
Render	xLights working out every light's colour for every moment, so the show can play.
.fseq	The finished, rendered show that your player (FPP, the Falcon Player, or xSchedule) actually plays. xLights writes it when you save.

How it works: the big idea

Every house is different. The sequence was designed on the designer's house, so its effects are attached to the *designer's* props. Your job is simply to say which of *your* props should play each part.



Mapping connects the designer's props (blue) to yours (gold). Names never need to match.

Why not just open the sequence file?

You *can* open it, but it would try to light the designer's props, which don't exist in your layout, so your house would stay dark. Instead you will:

- **make a brand-new, empty sequence** for your own house with the song in it (Step 3), then
- **import** the designer's effects into it, choosing where each part goes (Steps 4 and 5).

The purchased file stays untouched, so you can always start over.

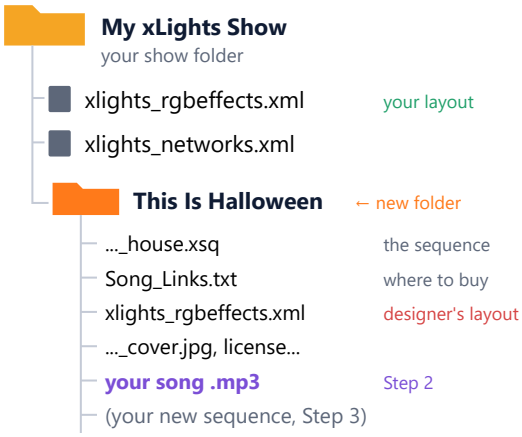
Good news for your next sequence
Sequences in this collection made for the same display (Christmas or Halloween) use the same prop names. Once you've matched them up and **saved your mapping** (Step 5), every future sequence for that display imports in about a minute.

Fewer props than the designer? No problem.
You don't have to fill every match. Anything you leave out is simply skipped, and several of the designer's parts can share one of your props.

STEP ONE

1 Unzip into your show folder

1. **Find your show folder.** In xLights, open the **Controllers** tab (called **Setup** in older versions). The folder's location is shown at the top.
2. In File Explorer (Finder on a Mac), open that folder and **make a new folder for the song**, for example `This Is Halloween`.
3. **Unzip** the download into that new folder: right-click the `.zip` → **Extract All**, and choose the song folder.



Everything for one song lives together in its own folder.

> **Never unzip straight into the show folder itself**
> The download includes the **designer's** layout file, `xlights_rgbeffects.xml`. It's there for reference. Your show folder has a file with the same name, which is **your** layout. Unzip into the song's **own** folder so yours is never replaced.

STEP TWO

2 Get the song

1. Open `Song_Links.txt` from the download. It names the **exact** recording the show was timed to, with links (Apple Music, Amazon Music, and the YouTube video it was made from).
2. **Buy** the song from a music store: Amazon gives you an **MP3**; the iTunes Store gives an **.m4a** file. xLights plays both.
3. Save (or move) the song file into the **song's folder** from Step 1.

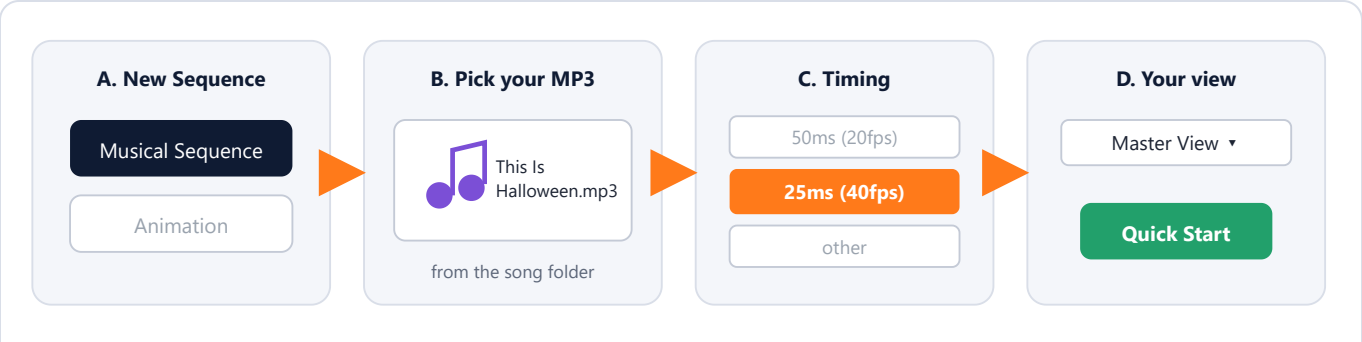
> **Buy it, don't stream it**
> A song "downloaded" inside a streaming subscription (Apple Music, Amazon Music Unlimited, Spotify) is locked to that app, and xLights can't play it. You need a purchased copy.

> **It must be the same version**
> Same artist, same recording. Not a remix, radio edit, live or "extended" version. The lights are timed to a few hundredths of a second; even a second of extra silence at the start makes the whole show run late.

STEP THREE

3 Make your own sequence with the song

This creates an **empty** sequence for *your* house, with your song loaded, ready to receive the effects.



The New Sequence wizard, simplified: four quick choices.

1. In xLights choose **File** → **New Sequence** (or press **Ctrl+N**).
2. Choose **Musical Sequence**.
3. Pick the **MP3 you bought** in Step 2, from the song's folder.
4. For timing, choose **25ms (40fps)**. These shows are built at 40 frames a second, so every effect lands exactly where it was designed.
5. Pick the view that shows all your props (usually the master view) and click **Quick Start**. You'll land on the **Sequencer** tab: your props down the left, the song's waveform across the top, no effects yet.
6. **Save it now** with **File** → **Save Sequence As**. Put it in the song's folder under a **new** name, such as `This Is Halloween - My House.xsq`.

Don't save over the purchased file
Give your sequence its own name. Keep the purchased `..._house.xsq` exactly as it came, so you can always import from it again.

Chose the wrong timing by mistake?
The simplest fix is to repeat this step and make the sequence again. Nothing is lost: you haven't imported anything yet.

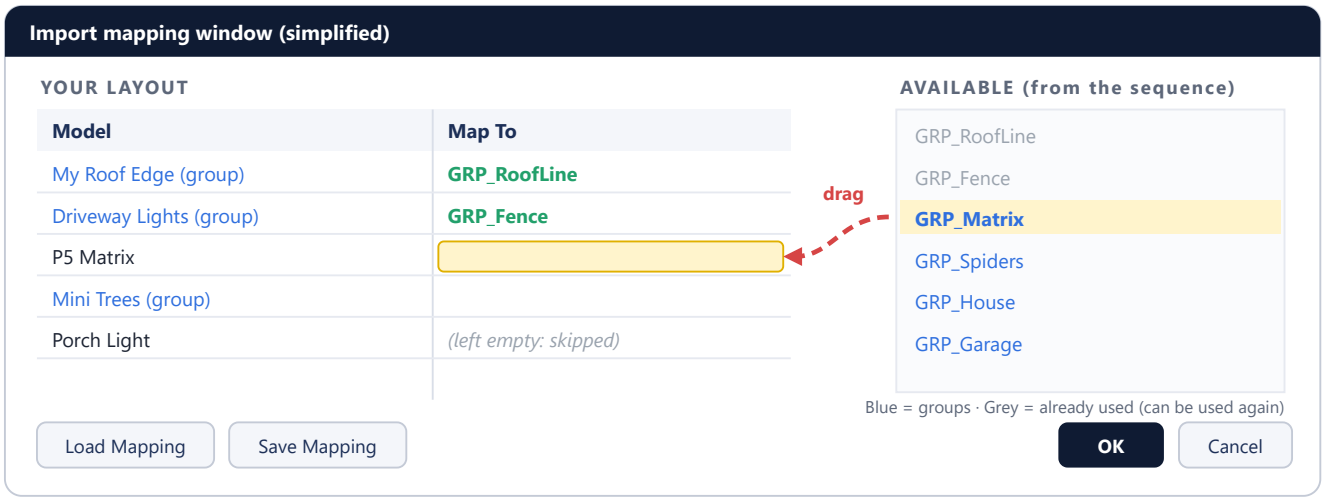
STEP FOUR

4 Import the effects

1. With **your** new sequence open, choose **Import** → **Import Effects** from the menu bar.
2. Browse to the song's folder and pick the purchased file, `..._house.xsq`.
3. The **mapping window** opens. That's Step 5.

STEP FIVE

5 Match the effects to your props



1. **Left side:** your props, each with an empty **Map To** box. **Right side:** the designer's props that hold effects.
2. **Drag** a name from the right and **drop** it into the **Map To** box of the prop that should play it. Rooflines to rooflines, matrix to matrix, and so on.
3. Work down your list. Leave a box empty if nothing fits; that prop just stays out of this song.
4. **Timing tracks:** in the timing-track list at the top of the window, tick the tracks you want (beats, bars, sections, and the lyric track ending in `_Vocal`). They're handy markers, and singing faces need the lyric track.
5. Click **Save Mapping** and save the `.xmap` file in your show folder, e.g. `Christmas map.xmap`. **Next time**, click **Load Mapping** and it's all filled in.
6. Click **OK**. The effects appear on your props in the Sequencer.

Mapping tips

★ Groups to groups

Most effects live on the designer's **groups** (`GRP_...`). Map them to your matching groups for the fullest show.

★ Reuse freely

One of the designer's props can feed **several** of yours: drop the same name into more than one box.

★ Shapes matter most

Match by shape: lines to lines (roofline, fence, outline), round things to round things, flat panels to matrices.

★ Experiment

Not happy with a match? Just run **Import Effects** again into a fresh sequence and try another.

STEP SIX

6 Render, watch, and save

1. Click **Render All** on the toolbar. The bar at the bottom shows progress; wait until it finishes.
2. Press **Play** and watch the **House Preview** from beginning to end. Every prop you mapped should come alive, in time with the music.
3. Save with **File** → **Save Sequence** (**Ctrl+S**). Saving also writes the `.fseq` file that your show player plays.
4. Add the sequence to your show the way you normally do: upload the `.fseq` and the MP3 to **FPP**, or add it to an **xSchedule** playlist.

✓ **That's it. Enjoy the show!**
The second song is much faster: unzip, buy the song, new sequence, Import Effects, **Load Mapping**, OK, Render, Save.

If something isn't right

What you see	Why, and what to do
Lights are early or late compared to the music	The song isn't the exact same recording. Get the version listed in `Song_Links.txt`, then make the sequence again (Step 3) and import with **Load Mapping**.
A prop stays dark	It wasn't given a match in Step 5, or it isn't in the view you picked in Step 3. Run **Import Effects** again and map it.
My whole house is dark after import	Click **Render All**. If it's still dark, the mapping was probably left empty. Import again and drag names across before clicking OK.
No sound when I play	The MP3 was moved or renamed after Step 3. Put it back where it was, or make the sequence again with the MP3's new location.
My own layout disappeared	The designer's `xlights_rgbeffects.xml` was copied over yours. Restore yours from xLights' **Backup** folder inside your show folder, and unzip downloads only into a song folder (Step 1).
Singing face doesn't move	The `_Vocal` timing track wasn't ticked in Step 5, or your face prop uses a different face design. Select its Faces effects and pick your prop's face in the effect settings.
An effect looks squashed or stretched	Your prop has a different shape or size from the designer's. It still plays; try mapping it to a different prop.
My menus look different	xLights changes a little between versions. Look for the same words nearby: *New Sequence, Import Effects, Map To, Render All.*

✓ Quick checklist (for every new song)

- [ ] Make a song folder inside your show folder
- [ ] Unzip the download into it
- [ ] Buy the exact song (Song_Links.txt), MP3 into the same folder
- [ ] New Sequence → Musical → your MP3 → 25ms (40fps)
- [ ] Save As with your own name
- [ ] Import → Import Effects → ..._house.xsq
- [ ] Load Mapping (or drag & drop), tick timing tracks, OK
- [ ] Render All, play, Save

Your license, in short

This sequence is for **your own display**. Please don't share, resell or upload it. Music isn't included; public or commercial shows may need separate music permission. The full terms are in `Digital_Content_License_ReadMe.pdf`.

Questions? Email **microcyb@gmail.com**. Tell us the song name and your xLights version.

xLights is a separate, free program made by its own volunteer team and is not affiliated with this content.