

1 GETTING TO KNOW THE WORKFLOW

Lesson overview

In this lesson you'll learn how to do the following:

- Create a project and import footage.
- Create compositions and arrange layers.
- Navigate the Adobe After Effects interface.
- Use the Project, Composition, and Timeline panels.
- Apply basic keyframes and effects.
- Preview your work using standard and RAM previews.
- Customize the workspace.
- Adjust preferences related to the workspace.
- Find additional resources for using After Effects.



A basic After Effects workflow follows six steps: importing and organizing footage, creating compositions and arranging layers, adding effects, animating elements, previewing your work, and rendering and outputting the final composition so that it can be viewed by others. In this lesson, you will create a simple animated video using this workflow, and along the way, you'll learn your way around the After Effects interface. This lesson will take about an hour to complete.



Whether you use After Effects to animate a simple DVD title sequence or to create complex special effects, you generally follow the same basic workflow. The After Effects interface facilitates your work and adapts to each stage of production.

Getting started

First, you'll preview the final movie to see what you'll create in this lesson.

- 1 Make sure the following files are in the AECS4_CIB/Lessons/Lesson01 folder on your hard disk, or copy them from the *Adobe After Effects CS4 Classroom in a Book* DVD now.
 - In the Assets folder: bgwtext.psd, DJ.mov, gc_adobe_dj.mp3, kaleidoscope_waveforms.mov, pulsating_radial_waves.mov
 - In the Sample_Movie folder: Lesson01.mov
- 2 Open and play the Lesson01.mov sample movie to see what you will create in this lesson. When you are done, quit QuickTime Player. You may delete this sample movie from your hard disk if you have limited storage space.

Creating a project and importing footage

When you begin each lesson of this book, it's a good idea to restore the default preferences for After Effects. (See "Restoring default preferences" on page 3.) You can do this with a simple keyboard shortcut.

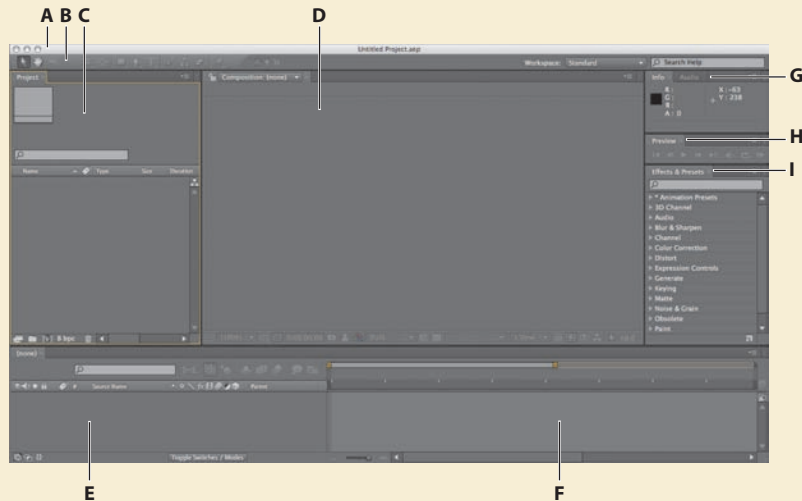
- 1 Press Ctrl+Alt+Shift (Windows) or Option+Command+Shift (Mac OS) while starting After Effects to restore default preferences settings. When prompted, click OK to delete your preferences file.
- 2 Click Close to close the Welcome window.

After Effects opens to display an empty, untitled project.

An After Effects project is a single file that stores references to all the footage you use in that project. It also contains *compositions*, which are the individual containers used to combine footage, apply effects, and, ultimately, drive the output.

About the After Effects workspace

After Effects offers a flexible, customizable workspace. The main window of the program is called the *application window*. Panels are organized in this window in an arrangement called a *workspace*. The default workspace contains groups of panels as well as panels that stand alone, as shown in the following figure.



A. Application window **B.** Tools panel **C.** Project panel **D.** Composition panel
E. Timeline panel **F.** Time graph **G.** Grouped panels (Info and Audio) **H.** Preview panel
I. Effects & Presets panel

You customize a workspace by dragging the panels into the configuration that best suits your working style. You can drag panels to new locations, move panels into or out of a group, place panels alongside each other, and undock a panel so that it floats in a new window above the application window. As you rearrange panels, the other panels resize automatically to fit the window.

When you drag a panel by its tab to relocate it, the area where you can drop it—called a *drop zone*—becomes highlighted. The drop zone determines where and how the panel is inserted into the workspace. Dragging a panel to a drop zone results in one of two behaviors: docking or grouping.

If you drop a panel along the edge of another panel, group, or window, it will *dock* next to the existing group, resizing all groups to accommodate the new panel.

If you drop a panel in the middle of another panel or group, or along the tab area of a panel, it will be added to the existing group and be placed at the top of the stack. Grouping a panel does not resize other groups.

You can also open a panel in a floating window. To do so, select the panel and then choose *Undock Panel* or *Undock Frame* from the panel menu. Or, drag the panel or group outside the application window.

► **Tip:** To quickly maximize a panel, position the pointer over it and press the ``` (accent grave) key (the unshifted character under the tilde, `~`, on standard US keyboards). Press the key again to return the panel to its original size.

► **Tip:** You can also double-click in the lower area of the Project panel to open the Import File dialog box, choose `File > Import > Multiple Files` to select files located in different folders, or drag and drop files from Explorer or the Finder. You can use Adobe Bridge to search for, manage, preview, and import footage.

When you begin a project, often the first thing you'll do is add footage to it.

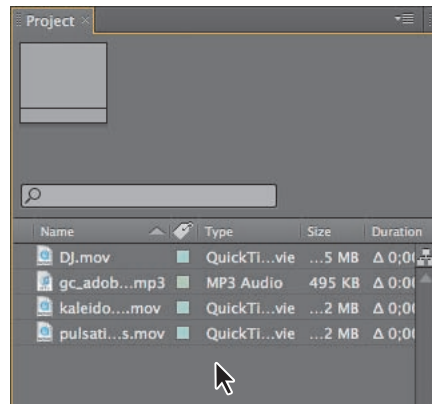
- 3 Choose `File > Import > File`.
- 4 Navigate to the Assets folder in your `AECS4_CIB/Lessons/Lesson01` folder. Shift-click to select the `DJ.mov`, `gc_adobe_dj.mp3`, `kaleidoscope_waveforms.mov`, and `pulsating_radial_waves.mov` files (all the files except `bgwtext.psd`). Then click `Open`.

A footage item is the basic unit in an After Effects project. You can import many types of footage items, including moving-image files, still-image files, still-image sequences, audio files, layered files from Adobe Photoshop and Adobe Illustrator, other After Effects projects, and projects created in Adobe Premiere Pro. You can import footage items at any time.

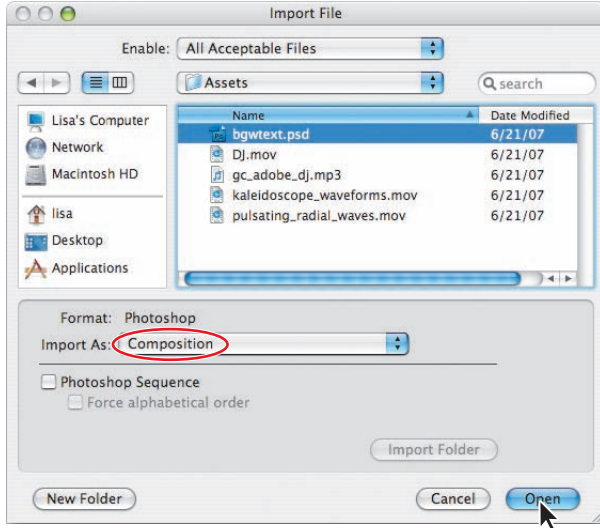
As you import assets, After Effects reports its progress in the Info panel.

Because one of the footage items for this project is a multilayer Photoshop file, you'll import it separately as a composition.

- 5 Double-click in the lower area of the Project panel to open the Import File dialog box.

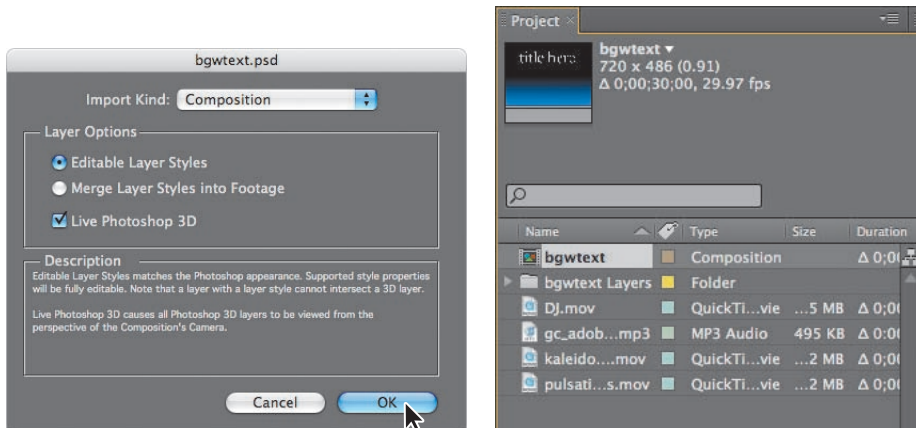


- 6 Navigate to the Lesson01/Assets folder again, and select the bgwtext.psd file. Choose Composition from the Import As menu, and then click Open.

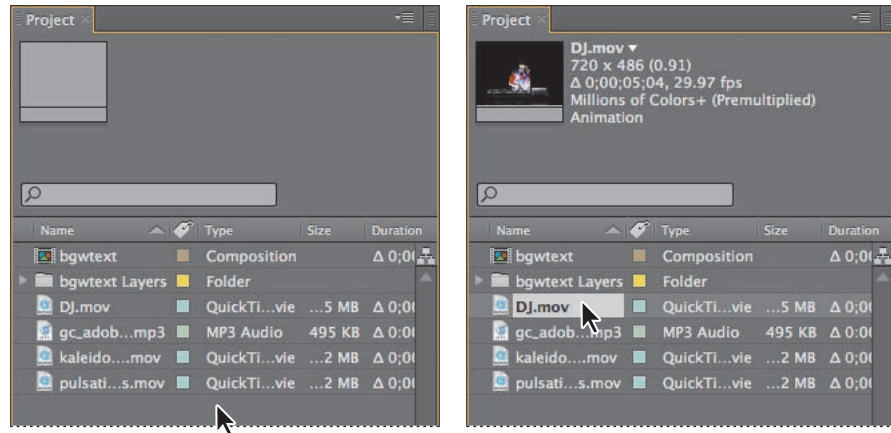


After Effects opens an additional dialog box with options for the file you're importing.

- 7 In the Bgwtext.psd dialog box, choose Composition from the Import Kind menu to import the layered Photoshop file as a composition. Select Editable Layer Styles in the Layer Options area, and then click OK. The footage items appear in the Project panel.



- 8 In the Project panel, deselect all footage items and then click to select any of them. Notice that a thumbnail preview appears at the top of the Project panel. You can also see the file type and size, as well as other information about each item, in the Project panel columns.



When you import files, After Effects doesn't copy the video and audio data itself into your project. Instead, each footage item in the Project panel contains a reference link to the source files. When After Effects needs to retrieve image or audio data, it reads it from the source file. This keeps the project file small, and it allows you to update source files in another application without modifying the project.

To save time and minimize the size and complexity of a project, import a footage item once and then use it multiple times in a composition. In some cases, you may need to import a source file more than once, such as if you want to use it at two different frame rates.

After you've imported footage, it's a good time to save the project.

- 9 Choose File > Save. In the Save As dialog box, navigate to the AECS4_CIB/Lessons/Lesson01/Finished_Project folder. Name the project **Lesson01_Finished.aep**, and then click Save.

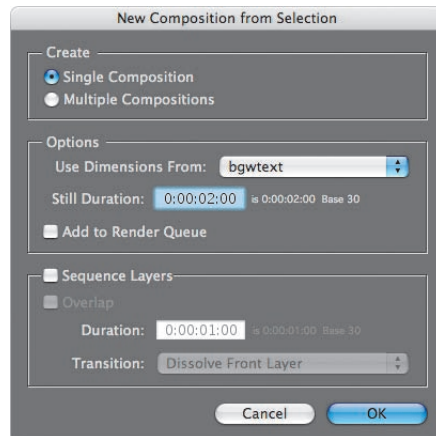
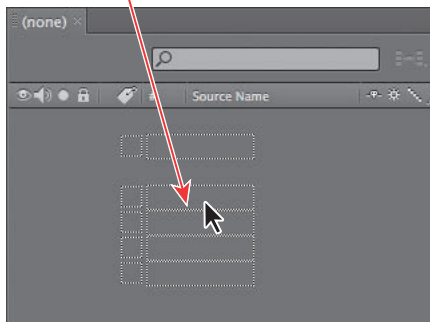
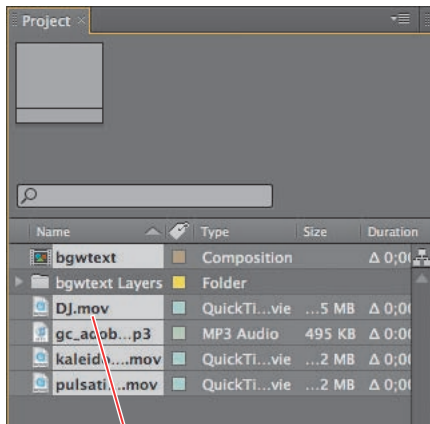
Creating a composition and arranging layers

The next step of the workflow is to create a composition. You create all animation, layering, and effects in a composition. An After Effects composition has both spatial dimensions and a temporal dimension (time).

Compositions include one or more layers, arranged in the Composition panel and in the Timeline panel. Any item that you add to a composition—such as a still image, moving-image file, audio file, light layer, camera layer, or even another composition—becomes a new layer. Simple projects may include only one composition, while elaborate projects may include several compositions to organize large amounts of footage or intricate effects sequences.

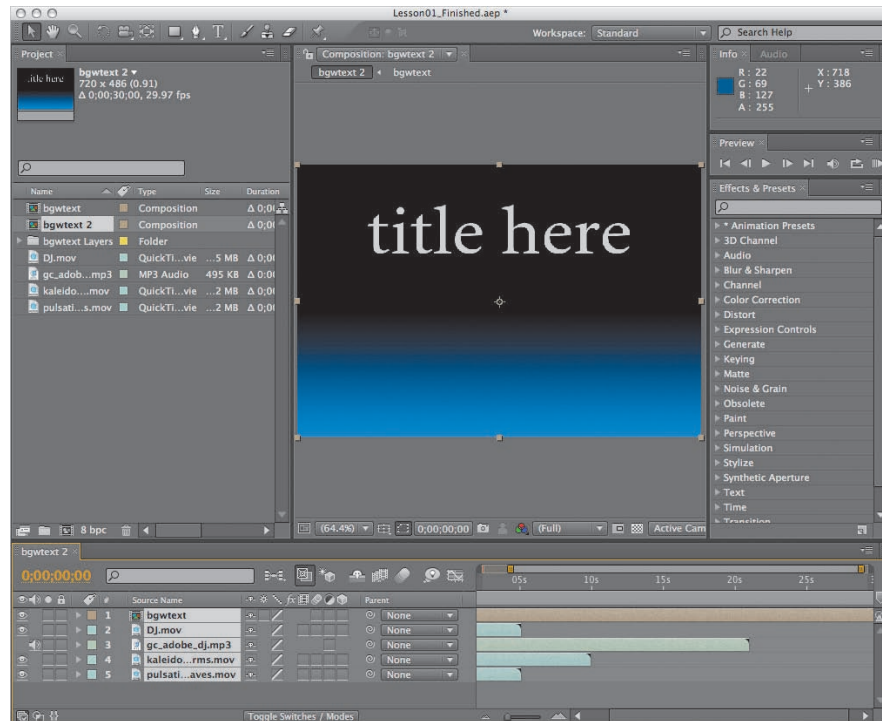
To create a composition, you will drag the footage items into the Timeline panel, and After Effects will create layers for them.

- 1 In the Project panel, Ctrl-click (Windows) or Command-click (Mac OS) to select the bgwtext composition as well as the DJ, gc_adobe_dj, kaleidoscope_waveforms, and pulsating_radial_waves footage items.
- 2 Drag the selected footage items into the Timeline panel. The New Composition from Selection dialog box appears.



After Effects bases the dimensions of the new composition on the selected footage. In this example, all of the footage is sized identically, so you can accept the default settings.

- 3 Click OK to create the new composition. The footage items appear as layers in the Timeline panel, and After Effects displays the composition, named **Bgtext 2**, in the Composition panel.



When you add a footage item to a composition, the footage becomes the source for a new layer. A composition can have any number of layers, and you can also include a composition as a layer in another composition, which is called *nesting*.

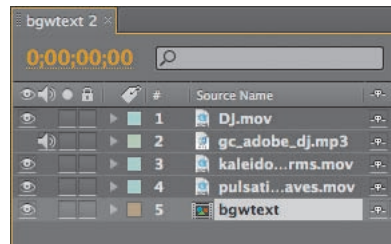
About layers

Layers are the components you use to build a composition. Any item that you add to a composition—such as a still image, moving-image file, audio file, light layer, camera layer, or even another composition—becomes a new layer. Without layers, a composition consists only of an empty frame.

Using layers, you can work with specific footage items in a composition without affecting any other footage. For example, you can move, rotate, and draw masks for one layer without disturbing any other layers in the composition, or you can use the same footage in more than one layer and use it differently in each instance. In general, the layer order in the Timeline panel corresponds to the stacking order in the Composition panel.

In this composition, there are five footage items and therefore five layers in the Timeline panel. Depending on the order in which the elements were selected when you imported them, your layer stack may differ from the one shown in the preceding figure. The layers need to be in a specific order as you add effects and animations, however, so you'll rearrange them now.

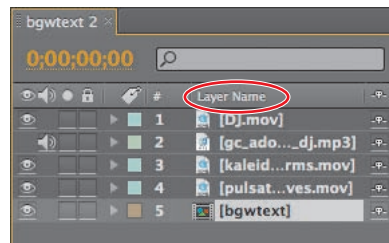
- 4 Click in an empty area of the Timeline panel to deselect the layers, and then drag Bgwtxt to the bottom of the layer stack if it is not already there. Drag the other four layers so that they're in the order shown in the figure.



● **Note:** You may need to click a blank area of the Timeline panel or press F2 to deselect layers before you can select an individual layer.

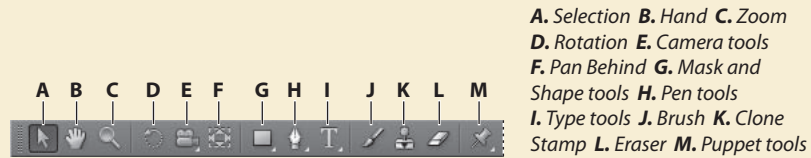
From this point forward in the workflow, you should be thinking about layers, not footage items. You'll change the column title accordingly.

- 5 Click the Source Name column title in the Timeline panel to change it to Layer Name.
- 6 Choose File > Save to save your project so far.



About the Tools panel

As soon as you create a composition, the tools in the Tools panel in the upper-left corner of the After Effects application window become available. After Effects includes tools that enable you to modify elements of your composition. Some of these tools—the Selection tool and the Hand tool, for example—will be familiar to you if you use other Adobe applications, such as Photoshop. Others will be new. The following image identifies the tools in the Tools panel for your reference.



When you hover the pointer over any button in the Tools panel, a tool tip identifies the tool and its keyboard shortcut. A small triangle in the lower-right corner of the button indicates that one or more additional tools are hidden behind it. Click and hold the button to display the hidden tools, and then select the tool you want to use.

Adding effects and modifying layer properties

● **Note:** This exercise is just the tip of the iceberg. You will learn more about effects and animation presets in Lesson 2, “Creating a Basic Animation Using Effects and Presets,” and throughout the rest of this book.

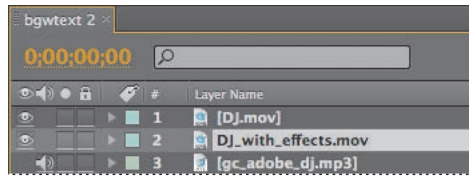
Now that your composition is set up, you can start having fun—applying effects, making transformations, and adding animation. You can add any combination of effects and modify any of a layer’s properties, such as size, placement, and opacity. Using effects, you can alter a layer’s appearance or sound, and even generate visual elements from scratch. The easiest way to start is to apply any of the hundreds of effects included with After Effects.

Preparing the layers

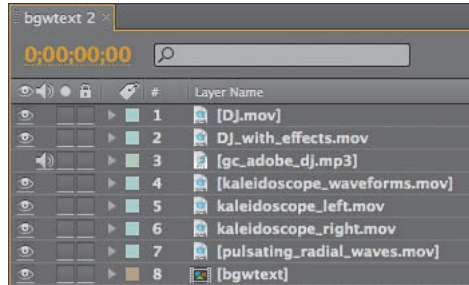
You’ll apply the effects to duplicates of selected layers—the DJ layer and the kaleidoscope_waveforms layer. Working with duplicates lets you apply an effect to one layer and then use it in conjunction with the unmodified original.

- 1 Select the first layer, DJ.mov, in the Timeline panel, and then choose Edit > Duplicate. A new layer with the same name appears at the top of the stack, so the first two layers are now both named DJ.mov.

- 2 Select the second layer and rename it to avoid confusion: Press Enter (Windows) or Return (Mac OS) to make the name editable, and type **DJ_with_effects**. Then press Enter or Return again to accept the new name.



- 3 Select the kaleidoscope_ waveforms layer and make two duplicates. Then, rename the duplicates **kaleidoscope_left** and **kaleidoscope_right**.
- 4 Drag if necessary to rearrange the layers in the Timeline panel so that they're in the order shown.

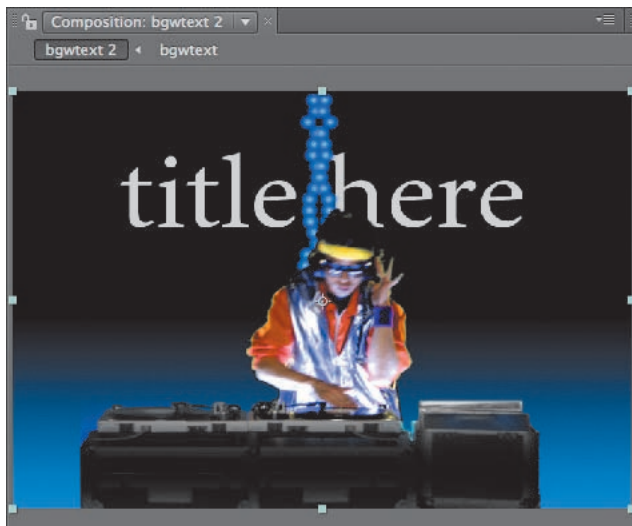


► **Tip:** Use the keyboard shortcut Ctrl+D (Windows) or Command+D (Mac OS) to duplicate the layers quickly.

Adding a Radial Blur effect

The Radial Blur effect creates blurs around a specific point in a layer, simulating the effects of a zooming or rotating camera. You'll add a Radial Blur effect to the DJ.

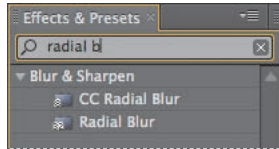
- 1 Select the DJ_with_effects layer in the Timeline panel. Notice that layer handles appear around the layer in the Composition panel.



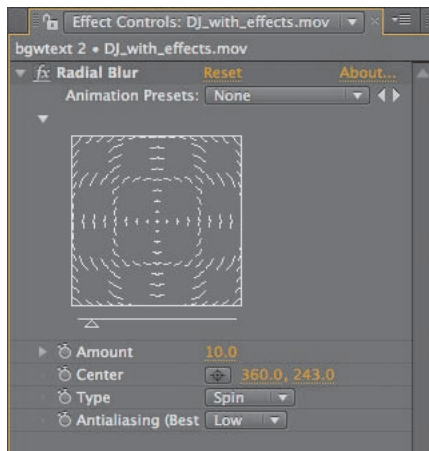
● **Note:** If you double-click a layer in the Timeline panel, it appears in the Layer panel. To return to the Composition panel, click the Composition tab.

- 2 In the Effects & Presets panel at the right side of the application window, type **radial blur** in the search box.

After Effects searches for effects and presets that contain the letters you type, and displays the results interactively. Before you have finished typing, the Radial Blur effect, located in the Blur & Sharpen category, appears in the panel.

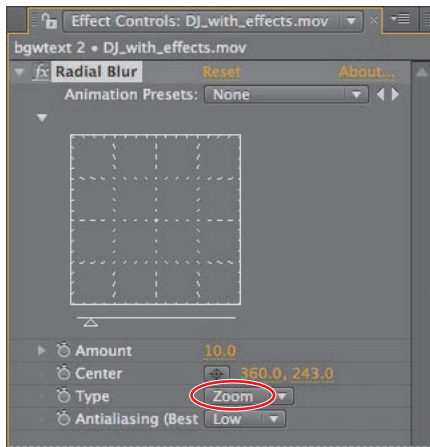


- 3 Drag the Radial Blur effect onto the DJ_with_effects layer in the Timeline panel. After Effects applies the effect and automatically opens the Effect Controls panel in the upper-left area of the workspace.

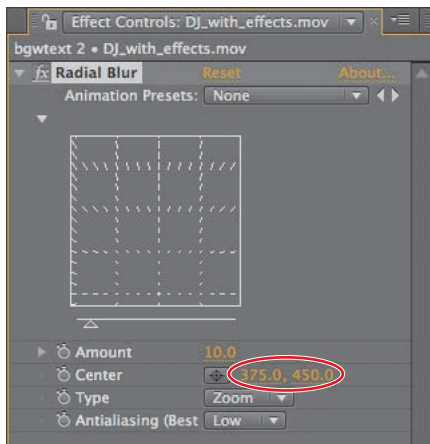


Now you'll customize the settings.

- 4 In the Effect Controls panel, choose Zoom from the Type menu.

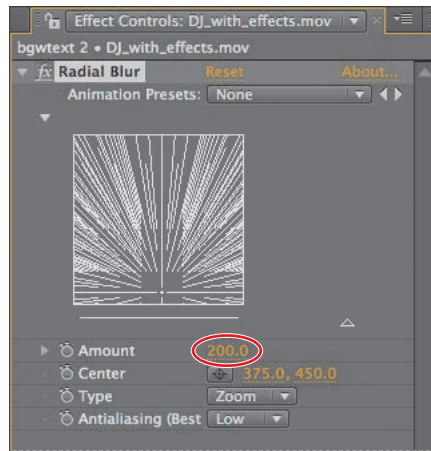


- 5 In the Composition panel, move the center point of the blur lower by dragging the center cross-hair (⊕) down until it's below the turntables. As you drag the cross-hair, the Center value updates in the Effect Controls panel. The left and right values are x and y coordinates, respectively. Center the blur at approximately 375, 450.



► **Tip:** You can also type the x and y values directly into the coordinate fields in the Effect Controls panel, or you can position the pointer over the fields to see the double-arrow icon (↔) and then drag right or left to increase or decrease the values, respectively. Dragging to change values is called *scrubbing*.

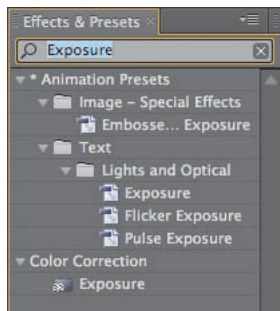
- 6 Finally, increase the Amount to 200.



Adding an exposure effect

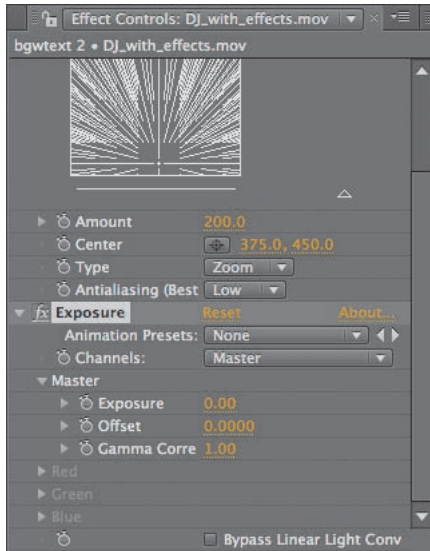
To punch up the brightness of this layer, you will apply the Exposure color-correction effect. This effect lets you make tonal adjustments to footage. It simulates the result of modifying the exposure setting (in f-stops) of the camera that captured the image.

- 1 Locate the Exposure effect in the Effects & Presets panel by doing one of the following:
 - Type **Exposure** in the search box.
 - Click the triangle next to Color Correction to expand the list of color-correction effects in alphabetical order.

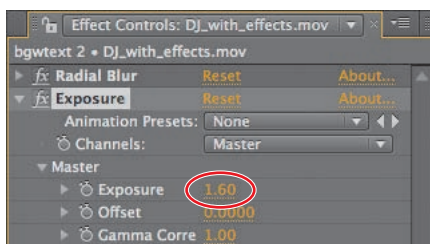


- 2 Drag the Exposure effect in the Color Correction category onto the DJ_with_effects layer name in the Timeline panel. After Effects adds the Exposure settings to the Effect Controls panel under the Radial Blur effect.

► **Tip:** Make sure to select the Exposure effect in the Color Correction category, not the Exposure animation preset in the Lights And Optical category.



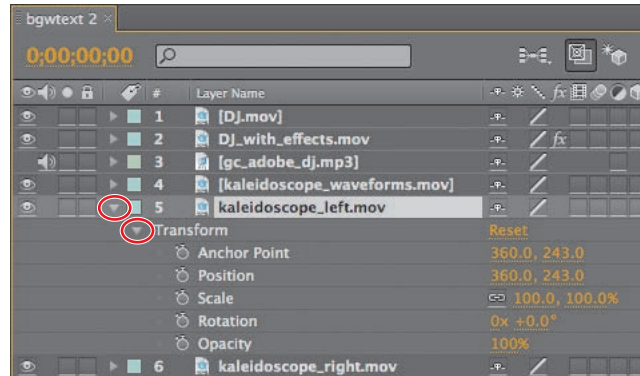
- 3 In the Effect Controls panel, click the triangle next to the Radial Blur effect to collapse those settings so that you can see the Exposure settings more easily.
- 4 For Master Exposure, enter **1.60**. This will make everything brighter in the layer to simulate an overexposed image.



Transforming layer properties

The DJ looks smashing, so you can turn your attention to the kaleidoscope waveforms that are part of the background. You'll reposition the copies you created earlier to create an edgy effect.

- 1 Select the `kaleidoscope_left` layer (layer 5) in the Timeline panel.
- 2 Click the triangle to the left of the layer number to expand the layer, and then expand the layer's Transform properties: Anchor Point, Position, Scale, Rotation, and Opacity.

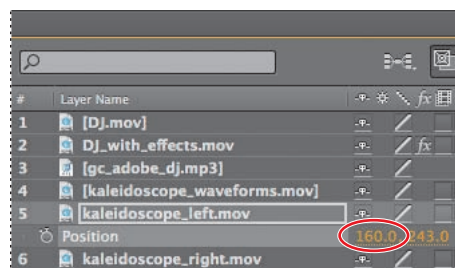


► **Tip:** With any layer selected in the Timeline panel, you can display any single Transform property by pressing a keyboard shortcut: **P** displays Position
A displays Anchor Point
S displays Scale
R displays Rotation
T displays Opacity.

- 3 If you can't see the properties, scroll down the Timeline panel using the scroll bar at the right side of the panel. Better yet, select the `kaleidoscope_left` layer name again and press **P**. This keyboard shortcut displays only the Position property, which is the only property you want to change for this exercise.

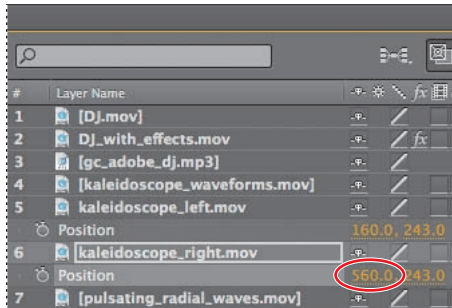
You'll move this layer to the left about 200 pixels.

- 4 Change the x coordinate for the Position property to **160**. Leave the y coordinate at 243.



- 5 Select the `kaleidoscope_right` layer (layer 6), and press **P** to display its Position property. You will move this layer to the right.

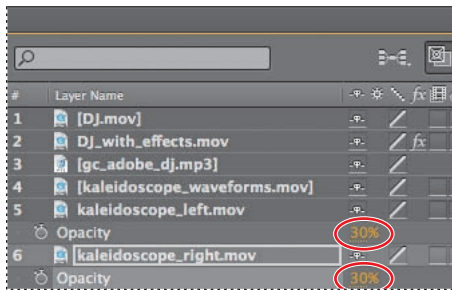
- 6 Change the x coordinate for the kaleidoscope_right Position property to **560**. Leave the y coordinate at 243. Now you can see the three waveforms—left, center, and right—in the Composition panel, hanging like a beaded light curtain.



To contrast the left and right waveforms with the center waveform, you will reduce their opacity.

- 7 Select the `kaleidoscope_left` layer in the Timeline panel and press **T** to reveal its Opacity property. Set it to **30%**.
- 8 Select the `kaleidoscope_right` layer in the Timeline panel, press **T** to reveal its Opacity property, and set it to **30%**.

► **Tip:** To change the Opacity property for multiple layers at once, select the layers, press **T**, and change the property for one of the selected layers.



- 9 Choose **File > Save** to save your work so far.

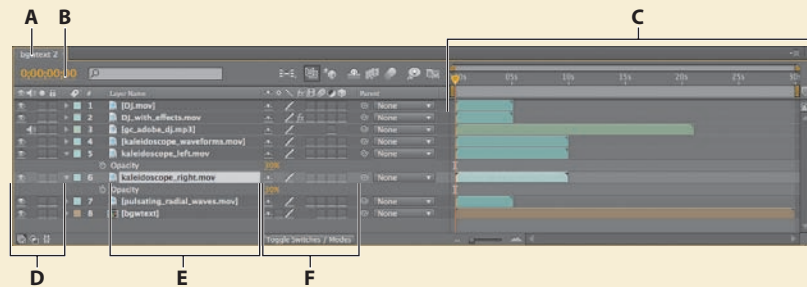
Animating the composition

So far, you've started a project, created a composition, imported footage, and applied some effects. It all looks great, but how about some movement? You've applied only static effects.

In After Effects, you can change any combination of a layer's properties over time using conventional keyframing, expressions, or keyframe assistants. You'll explore many of these methods throughout the lessons of this book. For this exercise, you will animate the Position property of a text layer using keyframes, and then use an animation preset so that the letters appear to rain down on the screen.

About the Timeline panel

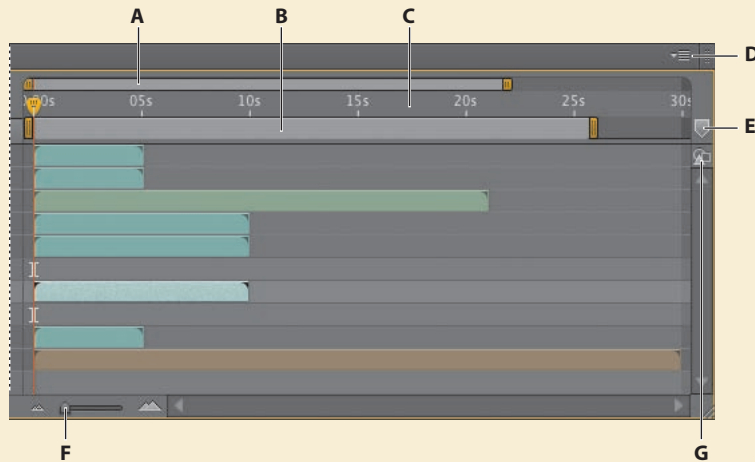
Use the Timeline panel to animate layer properties and set In and Out points for a layer. (In and Out points are the points at which a layer begins and ends in the composition.) Many of the Timeline panel controls are organized in columns of related functions. By default, the Timeline panel contains a number of columns and controls, as shown in the following figure:



A. Composition name **B.** Current time **C.** Time graph/Graph Editor area **D.** Audio/Video Switches column **E.** Source Name/Layer Name column **F.** Layer switches

About the time graph

The time graph portion of the Timeline panel (the right side) contains a time ruler, markers to indicate specific times, and duration bars for the layers in your composition.



A. Time navigator start and end brackets **B.** Work area start and end brackets
C. Time ruler **D.** Timeline panel menu **E.** Time zoom slider **F.** Composition button
G. Composition marker bin

Before delving too deep into animation, it helps to understand at least some of these controls. The duration of a composition, a layer, or a footage item is represented visually in the time ruler. On the time ruler, the current-time indicator indicates the frame you are viewing or editing, and the frame appears in the Composition panel.

The work area start and end brackets indicate the part of the composition that will be rendered for previews or final output. When you work on a composition, you may want to render only part of a composition. Do this by specifying a part of the composition time ruler as a work area.

A composition's current time appears in the upper-left corner of the Timeline panel. To move to a different time, drag the current-time indicator in the time ruler or click the current-time field in the Timeline panel or Composition panel, type a new time, and click OK.

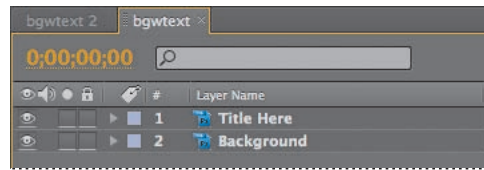
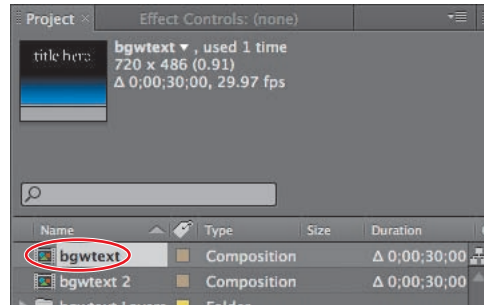
For more information about the Timeline panel, see After Effects Help.

Note: When you click the Graph Editor button (📊) in the Timeline panel, the layer bars in the time ruler are replaced with the Graph Editor. You'll learn more about the Graph Editor in Lesson 6, "Animating Layers."

Preparing the text composition

For this exercise, you'll work with a separate composition—the one you imported from a layered Photoshop file.

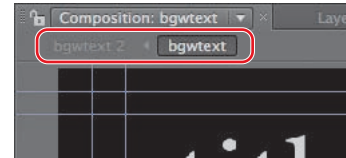
- 1 Click the Project tab to display the Project panel, and then double-click the `bgwtext` composition to open it as a composition in its own Timeline panel.



This composition is the layered Photoshop file you imported. Two layers, Background and Title Here, appear in the Timeline panel. The Title Here layer contains placeholder text that was created in Photoshop.

● **Note:** You can quickly navigate within a composition network using the Composition Mini-Flowchart. To display the flowchart, tap the Shift key when a Composition, Timeline, or Layer panel is active.

At the top of the Composition panel is the Composition Navigator bar, which displays the relationship between the main composition (`Bgwtext 2`) and the current composition (`Bgwtext`), which is nested within the main composition.

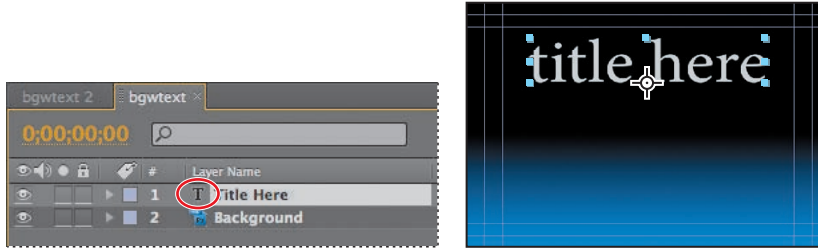


You can nest multiple compositions within each other; the Composition Navigator bar displays the entire composition path. Arrows between the composition names indicate the direction in which pixel information flows.

Before you can replace the text, you need to make the layer editable.

- 2 Select the Title Here layer (layer 1) in the Timeline panel and then choose Layer > Convert to Editable Text.

● **Note:** If you see a warning about missing fonts, just click OK.



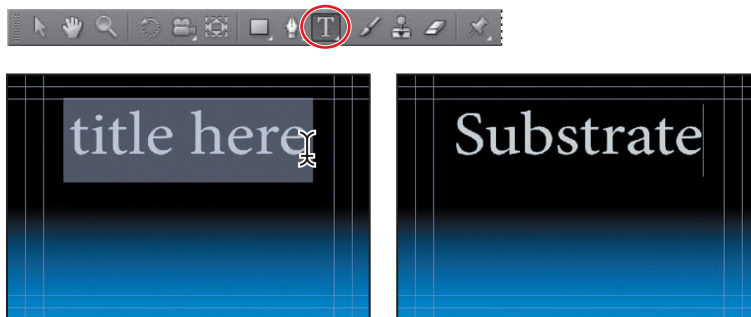
A T icon appears next to the layer name in the Timeline panel, indicating that it is now an editable text layer. The layer is also selected in the Composition panel, ready for you to edit.

Animating text with Position keyframes

You'll start by replacing the placeholder text with real text. Then, you'll animate it.

- 1 Select the Horizontal Type tool (T) in the Tools panel, and drag over the placeholder text in the Composition panel to select it. Then, type **Substrate**.

● **Note:** After Effects offers robust character and paragraph formatting controls, but the default settings—whatever typeface appeared when you typed—should be fine for this project. You'll learn more about type in Lesson 3, "Animating Text."




- 2 Select the Title Here layer in the Timeline panel again, and press **P** to display its Position property.
- 3 Make sure you're at the first frame of the animation by doing one of the following:
 - Drag the current-time indicator all the way to the left of the time ruler, to 0:00.
 - Press the Home key on your keyboard.

About timecode and duration


The primary concept related to time is *duration*, or length. Each footage item, layer, and composition in a project has its own duration, which is reflected in the beginning and ending times displayed in the time rulers in the Composition, Layer, and Timeline panels.

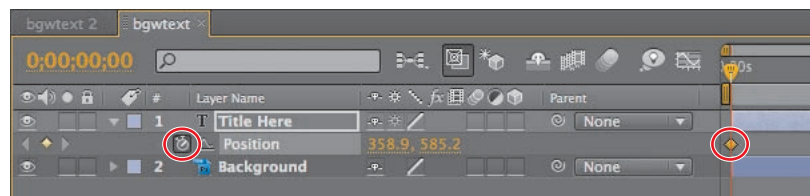
The way you view and specify time in After Effects depends on the display style, or unit of measure, that you use to describe time. By default, After Effects displays time in Society of Motion Picture and Television Engineers (SMPTE) timecode: hours, minutes, seconds, and frames. Note that the figures are separated by semicolons in the After Effects interface, representing drop-frame timecode (which adjusts for the real-time frame rate), but this book uses a colon to represent non-drop-frame timecode.

To learn when and how to change to another system of time display, such as frames or feet and frames of film, see After Effects Help.

- 4 Using the Selection tool () , drag the text layer down and off the bottom of the Composition panel, out of the viewing area. Press Shift after you start dragging to constrain the operation to the vertical axis.

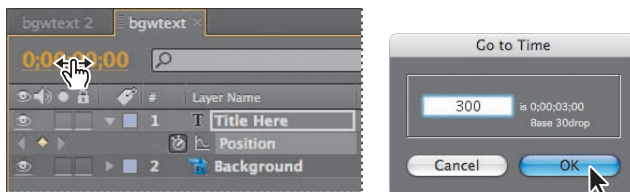


- 5 In the Timeline panel, click the stopwatch icon () for the layer's Position property to create a Position keyframe. An orange diamond appears in the Position bar for the layer in the time graph, indicating the new keyframe.



Keyframes are used to create and control animation, effects, audio properties, and many other kinds of changes that occur over time. A keyframe marks the point in time where you specify a value, such as spatial position, opacity, or audio volume. Values between keyframes are *interpolated*. When you use keyframes to create a change over time, you must use at least two keyframes—one for the state at the beginning of the change, and one for the state at the end of the change.

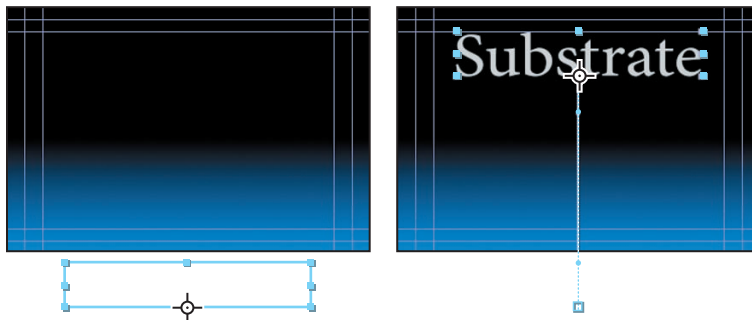
- Go to 3:00 by doing one of the following:
 - Drag the current-time indicator to the right in the time ruler so that it's positioned at 3:00.
 - Click the Current Time field in the Timeline panel or Composition panel, type **300** (for 3 seconds) in the Go To Time dialog box, and click OK.



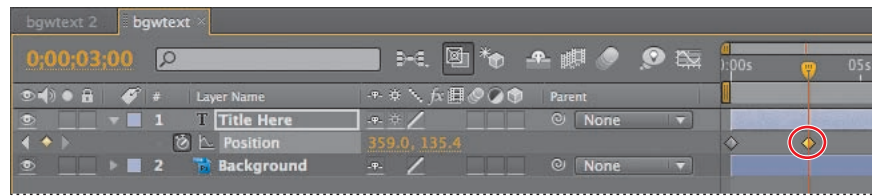
Now you can drag the Substrate title to its final position, but since you dragged it off the screen in step 4, you'll need to zoom out to grab it.

- With the Title Here layer still selected in the Timeline panel, select the Zoom tool (🔍) and Alt-click (Windows) or Option-click (Mac OS) to zoom out so that you can see the text layer on the pasteboard of the Composition panel.
- Switch back to the Selection tool (🖱️) and drag the text layer up in the Composition panel, to the top quarter of the viewing area. Press Shift to constrain the drag operation to the vertical axis. Your final Position values should be approximately 359, 135.

► **Tip:** Instead of zooming and dragging, you could also type the values into the text layer's Position fields in the Timeline panel.



After Effects automatically creates a second keyframe at this position.

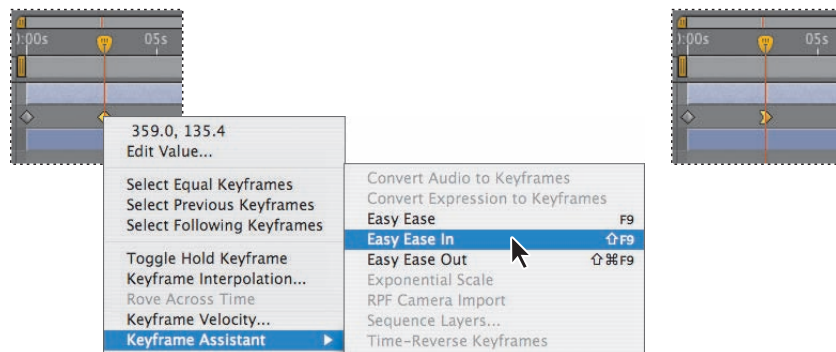


- 9 To zoom back in to the composition, choose Fit Up To 100% from the Magnification Ratio pop-up menu in the lower-left corner of the Composition panel.

The blue lines at the top, bottom, and sides of the Composition panel indicate title-safe and action-safe zones. Television sets enlarge a video image and allow some portion of its outer edges to be cut off by the edge of the screen. This is known as *overscan*. The amount of overscan is not consistent between television sets, so you should keep important parts of a video image, such as action or titles, within margins called *safe zones*. Keep your text inside the inner blue guides to ensure that it is in the title-safe zone, and keep important scene elements inside the outer blue guides to ensure that they are in the action-safe zone.

Even though this is a simple animation, you'll learn good animation practices right away by adding ease-in controls using the Easy Ease feature. Easing into (and out of) animations keeps the motion from appearing to be too sudden or robotic.

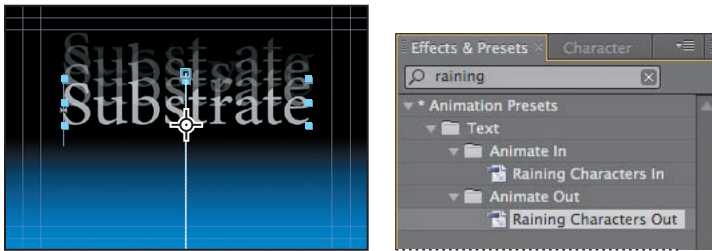
- 10 Right-click (Windows) or Control-click (Mac OS) the Position keyframe at 3:00 and choose Keyframe Assistant > Easy Ease In. As the text approaches its final position, it will ease to a smooth stop. The keyframe icon changes to an arrow.



Adding an animation preset

So far, the text is moving onto the screen. After it arrives, you don't want it to just sit there. Applying an animation preset will bring it to life.

- 1 With the Title Here layer still selected in the Timeline panel, go to 2:10, the point at which the text is almost at its final position. Remember, you can go to the time by dragging the current-time indicator or by clicking the Current Time field in the Timeline panel or Composition panel.
- 2 Click the Effects & Presets tab, and then type **raining** in the search box to quickly locate the Raining Characters animation presets.
- 3 Drag the Raining Characters Out effect onto the word *Substrate* in the Composition panel to apply it to the text layer.



The Effect Controls panel opens so that you can customize the Echo effect, which is a component of the animation preset. The default settings are fine for this project.

- 4 Choose File > Save to save your work so far.

Previewing your work

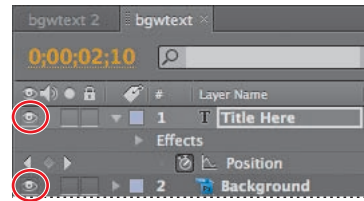
You're probably eager to see the results of your work. After Effects provides several methods for previewing compositions, including standard preview, RAM preview, and manual preview. (For a list of manual preview controls, see After Effects Help.) All three methods are accessible through the Preview panel, which appears on the right side of the application window in the Standard workspace.

Using standard preview

Standard preview (commonly called a *spacebar preview*) plays the composition from the current-time indicator to the end of the composition. Standard previews usually play more slowly than real time. They are useful when your composition is simple or in its early stages and doesn't require additional memory for displaying complex animations, effects, 3D layers, cameras, and lights. You'll use it now to preview the text animation.

► **Tip:** Click the pasteboard of the Composition panel if you want to hide the motion path for this preview.

- 1 In the Bgtext Timeline panel, make sure that the Video switch (📺) is selected for the layers that you want to preview—the Title Here and Background layers, in this case.



- 2 Press the Home key to go to the beginning of the time ruler.
- 3 Do one of the following:

- Click the Play/Pause button (▶) in the Preview panel.
- Press the spacebar.



- 4 To stop the standard preview, do one of the following:
- Click the Play/Pause button in the Preview panel.
 - Press the spacebar.

Using RAM preview

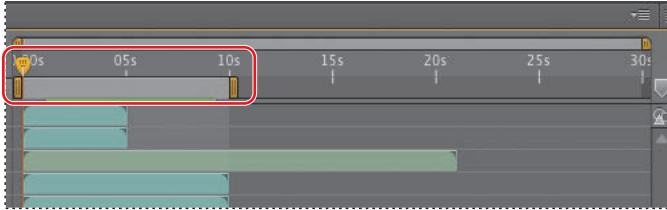
RAM preview allocates enough RAM to play the preview (with audio) as fast as the system allows, up to the frame rate of the composition. Use RAM preview to play footage in the Timeline, Layer, or Footage panel. The number of frames played depends on the amount of RAM available to the application.

In the Timeline panel, RAM preview plays either the span of time you specify as the work area, or from the beginning of the time ruler. In the Layer and Footage panels, RAM preview plays only untrimmed footage. Before you preview, check which frames are designated as the work area.

You'll preview the entire composition—the animated text plus graphic effects—using a RAM preview.

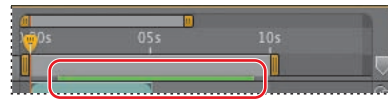
- 1 Click the Bgtext 2 tab in the Timeline panel to bring it forward.
- 2 Make sure that the Video switch (📺) is turned on for all of the layers in the composition, and press F2 to deselect all layers.

- 3 Drag the work area brackets to the time span you want to preview: the work area start bracket should be at 0:00, and the work area end bracket should be at 10:00.



- 4 Drag the current-time indicator to the beginning of the time ruler, or press the Home key.
- 5 Click the RAM Preview button (⏮) in the Preview panel or choose Composition > Preview > RAM Preview.

A green progress bar indicates which frames are cached to RAM. When all of the frames in the work area are cached, the RAM preview plays back in real time.



► **Tip:** You can interrupt the caching process at any time by pressing the spacebar, and the RAM preview will play back only the frames that have been cached to that point.

- 6 To stop the RAM preview, press the spacebar.

The more detail and precision you want to see, the more RAM is required for RAM preview. You can control the amount of detail shown in either the standard or RAM preview by changing the resolution, magnification, and preview quality of your composition. You can also limit the number of layers previewed by turning off the Video switch for certain layers, or limit the number of frames previewed by adjusting the composition's work area.

- 7 Choose File > Save to save your project.

About OpenGL previews

OpenGL provides high-quality previews that require less rendering time than other playback modes. It provides fast screen previewing of a composition without degrading resolution, which makes it a desirable preview option for many situations. When OpenGL does not support a feature, it simply creates a preview without using that feature. For example, if your layers contain shadows and your OpenGL hardware does not support shadows, the preview will not contain shadows. You can view information about your OpenGL card, if you have one, as well as enable or disable OpenGL, by choosing Edit > Preferences > Previews (Windows) or After Effects > Preferences > Previews (Mac OS). See After Effects Help for more information about using OpenGL.

Optimizing performance in After Effects

How you configure After Effects and your computer determines how quickly After Effects renders projects. Complex compositions can require a large amount of memory to render, and the rendered movies can take a large amount of disk space to store. Refer to “Improve Performance” in After Effects Help for tips that can help you configure your system, After Effects preferences, and your projects for better performance.

Rendering and exporting your composition

When you’re finished with your masterpiece—as you are now—you can render and export it at the quality settings you choose and create movies in the formats that you specify. You will learn more about exporting compositions in subsequent lessons, especially in Lesson 14, “Rendering and Outputting.” If you’d like to skip ahead to Lesson 14 and render and export this project, you’re welcome to do so. Otherwise, you can just save it, and continue getting acquainted with the After Effects workspace.

Customizing the workspace

In the course of this project, you may have resized or repositioned some panels, or opened new ones. As you modify the workspace, After Effects saves those modifications, so the next time you open the project, the most recent version of the workspace is used. However, you can choose to restore the original workspace at any time by choosing `Window > Workspace > Reset “Standard.”`

Alternatively, if you find yourself frequently using panels that aren’t part of the Standard workspace, or if you like to resize or group panels for different types of projects, you can save time by customizing the workspace to suit your needs. You can save any workspace configuration, or use any of the preset workspaces that come with After Effects. These predefined workspaces are suitable for different types of workflows, such as animation or effects work.

Using predefined workspaces

Take a minute to explore the predefined workspaces in After Effects.

- 1 If you closed the Lesson01_Finished.aep project, open it—or any other project—to explore the workspaces.
- 2 Choose Window > Workspace > Animation. After Effects opens the following panels at the right side of the application window: Info and Audio (grouped), Preview, Smoother, Wiggler, Motion Sketch, and Effects & Presets.



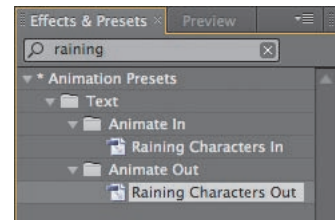
You can also change workspaces using the Workspace menu at the top of the window.

- 3 Choose Paint from the Workspace menu at the top of the application window, next to the Search Help box. The Paint and Brushes panels open. The Composition panel is replaced by the Layer panel, for easy access to the tools and controls you need to paint in your compositions.

Saving a custom workspace

You can save any workspace, at any time, as a custom workspace. Once saved, new and edited workspaces appear in the Window > Workspace submenu and in the Workspace menu at the top of the application window. If a project with a custom workspace is opened on a system other than the one on which it was created, After Effects looks for a workspace with a matching name. If After Effects finds a match (and the monitor configuration matches), it uses that workspace; if it can't find a match (or the monitor configuration doesn't match), it opens the project using the current local workspace.

- 1 Close the Paint and Brushes panels by clicking the small *x* next to the panel names.
- 2 Choose Window > Effects & Presets to open that panel, and then drag it into a group with the Preview panel.



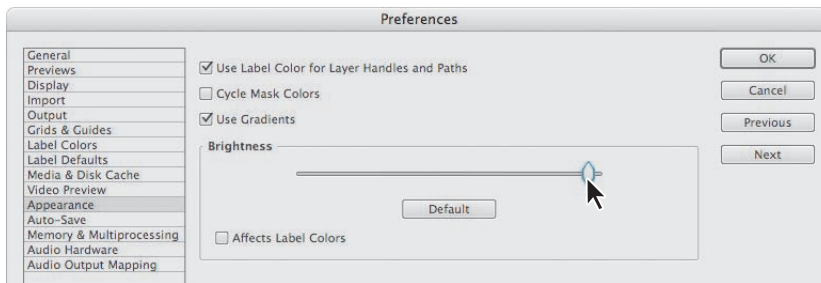
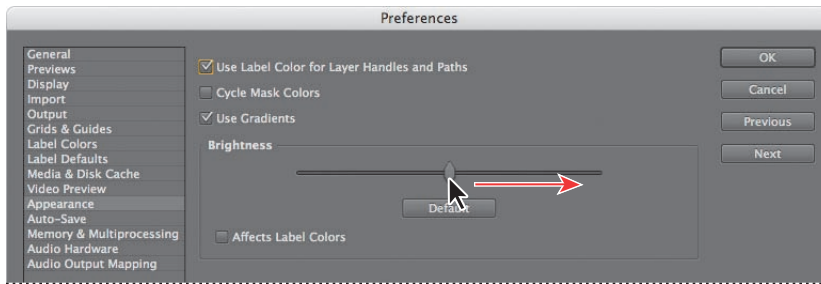
- 3 Choose Window > Workspace > New Workspace. Enter a name for the workspace and click OK to save it, or click Cancel if you don't want to save it.

Controlling the brightness of the user interface

You can brighten or darken the After Effects user interface. Changing the brightness preference affects panels, windows, and dialog boxes.

- 1 Choose Edit > Preferences > Appearance (Windows) or After Effects > Preferences > Appearance (Mac OS).

- 2 Drag the Brightness slider to the left or right and notice how the screen changes.



- 3 Click OK to save the new brightness setting or Cancel to leave your preferences unchanged. You can click Default to restore the default brightness setting.

Finding resources for using After Effects

For complete and up-to-date information about using After Effects panels, tools, and other application features, visit the Adobe website. To search for information in After Effects Help and support documents, as well as other websites relevant to After Effects users, simply enter a search term in the Search Help box in the upper-right corner of the application window. You can narrow the results to view only Adobe Help and support documents, as well.

If you plan to work in After Effects when you're not connected to the Internet, download the most current PDF version of After Effects Help from www.adobe.com/go/documentation.

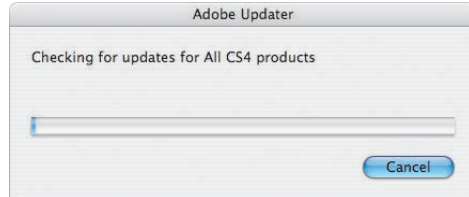
For additional resources, such as tips and techniques and the latest product information, check out the Adobe Community Help page at community.adobe.com/help/main.

● **Note:** If After Effects detects that you are not connected to the Internet when you start the application, choosing Help > After Effects Help opens the Help HTML pages installed with After Effects. For more up-to-date information, view the Help files online or download the current PDF for reference.

Checking for updates

Adobe periodically provides updates to software. You can easily obtain these updates through Adobe Updater, as long as you have an active Internet connection.

- 1 In After Effects, choose Help > Updates. The Adobe Updater automatically checks for updates available for your Adobe software.



● **Note:** To set your preferences for future updates, click Preferences. Select how often you want Adobe Updater to check for updates, for which applications, and whether to download them automatically. Click OK to accept the new settings.

- 2 In the Adobe Updater dialog box, select the updates you want to install, and then click Download And Install Updates to install them.

Congratulations. You've finished Lesson 1. Now that you're acquainted with the After Effects workspace, you can continue to Lesson 2 to learn how to create and animate compositions using effects and preset animations, or you can proceed to another lesson in this book.

Review questions

- 1 What are the basic components of the After Effects workflow?
- 2 What is a composition?
- 3 Describe three ways to preview your work in After Effects.
- 4 How can you customize the After Effects workspace?

Review answers

- 1 Most After Effects workflows include these steps: import and organize footage, create compositions and arrange layers, add effects, animate elements, preview your work, and export the final composition.
- 2 A composition is where you create all animation, layering, and effects. An After Effects composition has both spatial dimensions and time. Compositions include one or more layers—video, audio, still images—arranged in the Composition panel and in the Timeline panel. Simple projects may include only one composition, while elaborate projects may include several compositions to organize large amounts of footage or intricate effects sequences.
- 3 You can manually preview your work in After Effects by moving the current-time indicator, or you can view either a standard or RAM preview. A standard preview plays your composition from the current-time indicator to the end of the composition, usually more slowly than real time. A RAM preview allocates enough RAM to play the preview (with audio) as fast as the system allows, up to the frame rate of the composition.
- 4 You can customize the After Effects workspace by dragging the panels into the configuration that best suits your working style. You can drag panels to new locations, move panels into or out of groups, place panels alongside each other, and undock a panel so that it floats above the application window. As you rearrange panels, the other panels resize automatically to fit the application window. You can save custom workspaces by choosing Window > Workspace > New Workspace.

2

CREATING A BASIC ANIMATION USING EFFECTS AND PRESETS

Lesson overview

In this lesson you'll learn how to do the following:

- Use Adobe Bridge to preview and import footage items.
- Work with the layers of an imported Adobe Illustrator file.
- Apply drop shadow and emboss effects.
- Apply a text animation preset.
- Adjust the time range of a text animation preset.
- Precompose layers.
- Apply a dissolve transition effect.
- Adjust the transparency of a layer.
- Render an animation for broadcast use.
- Export an animation in SWF format for the web.



In this lesson, you will continue to learn the basics of the Adobe After Effects project workflow. You'll learn new ways to accomplish basic tasks as you create a simple newscast identification graphic for a fictional TV station, Channel 5. You will animate the newscast ID so that it fades to become a watermark that can appear in the lower-right corner of the screen during other TV programs. Then, you'll export the ID for use in broadcast output and as an SWF file for the web. This lesson will take about an hour to complete.