

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.



After Effects lets you hit the ground running with a variety of effects and animation presets. You can use them to create great-looking animations quickly and easily.

Getting started

- 1 Make sure the following files are in the AECS4_CIB/Lessons/Lesson02 folder on your hard disk, or copy them from the *Adobe After Effects CS4 Classroom in a Book DVD* now.
 - In the Assets folder: 5logo.ai, ggbridge.jpg
 - In the Sample_Movie folder: Lesson02.mov
- 2 Open and play the Lesson02.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.

When you begin the lesson, restore the default application settings for After Effects. See “Restoring default preferences” on page 3.

- 3 Press Ctrl+Alt+Shift (Windows) or Command+Option+Shift (Mac OS) while starting After Effects. When asked whether you want to delete your preferences file, click OK.
- 4 Click Close to close the Welcome window.

After Effects opens to display a blank, untitled project.

- 5 Choose File > Save As.
- 6 In the Save As dialog box, navigate to the AECS4_CIB/Lessons/Lesson02/Finished_Project folder.
- 7 Name the project **Lesson02_Finished.aep**, and then click Save.

Importing footage using Adobe Bridge

In Lesson 1, you chose File > Import > File to import footage. However, After Effects also offers another, more powerful and flexible way to import footage for a composition: using Adobe Bridge. You can use Adobe Bridge to organize, browse, and locate the assets you need to create content for print, the web, television, DVD, film, and mobile devices. Adobe Bridge keeps native Adobe files (such as PSD and PDF files) as well as non-Adobe application files available for easy access. You can drag assets into your layouts, projects, and compositions as needed; preview assets; and even add metadata (file information) to assets to make files easier to locate.

In this exercise, you will jump to Adobe Bridge to import the still-image file that will serve as the background of your composition.

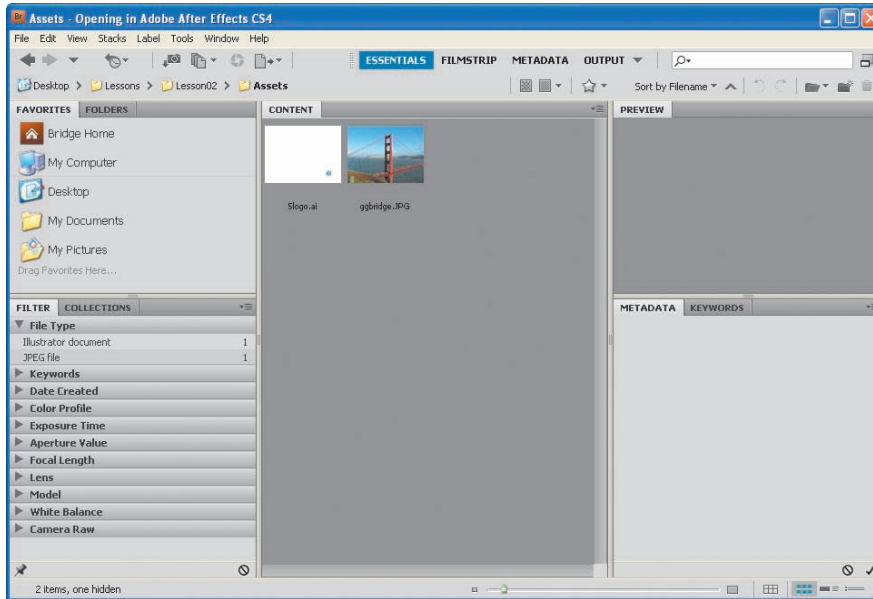
- 1 Choose File > Browse In Bridge. If you receive a message about adding an extension to Adobe Bridge, click OK.

Adobe Bridge opens, displaying a collection of panels, menus, and buttons.

► **Tip:** To open Adobe Bridge directly, choose Adobe Bridge from the Start menu (Windows) or double-click the Adobe Bridge icon in the Applications /Adobe Bridge folder (Mac OS).

- 2 Click the Folders tab in the upper-left corner of Adobe Bridge.
- 3 In the Folders panel, navigate to the AECS4_CIB/Lessons/Lesson02/Assets folder. Click the arrows to open nested folders. You can also double-click folder thumbnail icons in the Content panel.

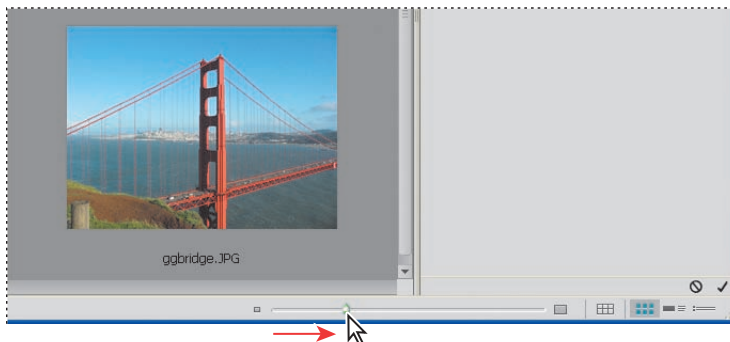
● **Note:** We're using the Essentials workspace, which is the default workspace in Bridge.



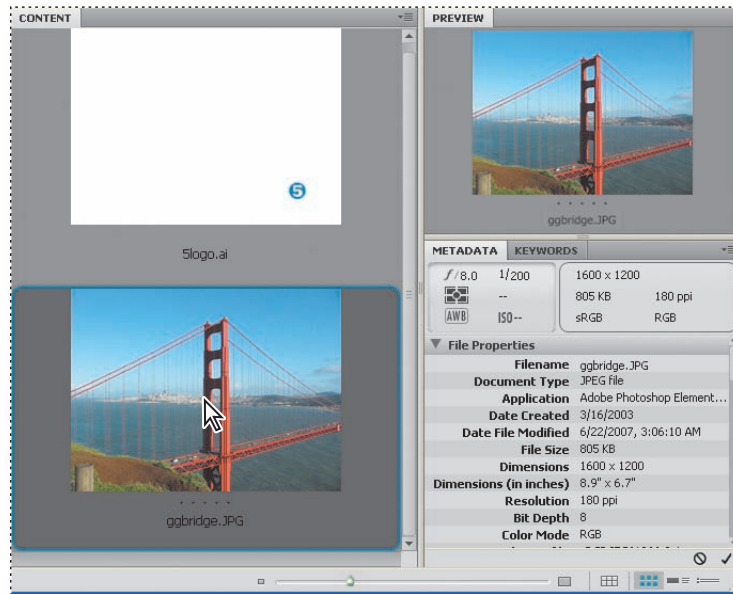
The Content panel updates interactively. For example, when you select the Assets folder in the Folders panel, thumbnail previews of the folder's contents appear in the Content panel. Adobe Bridge displays previews of image files such as those in PSD, TIFF, and JPEG formats, as well as Illustrator vector files, multipage Adobe PDF files, QuickTime movie files, and more.

- 4 Drag the thumbnail slider at the bottom of the Adobe Bridge window to enlarge the thumbnail previews.

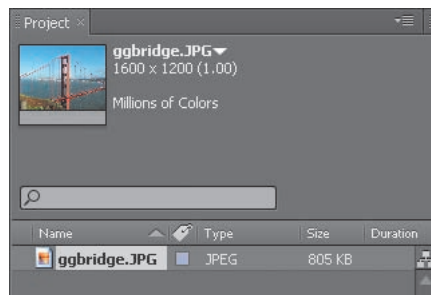
► **Tip:** You can emphasize different information in Adobe Bridge by changing the workspace. To change the workspace, choose Window > Workspace > and then select a workspace. See Adobe Bridge Help to learn more about customizing Adobe Bridge.



- 5 Select the ggbridge.jpg file in the Content panel, and notice that it appears in the Preview panel, as well. Information about the file, including its creation date, bit depth, and file size, appears in the Metadata panel.



- 6 Double-click the ggbridge.jpg thumbnail in the Content panel to place the file in your After Effects project. Alternatively, you can drag the thumbnail into the Project panel in After Effects.

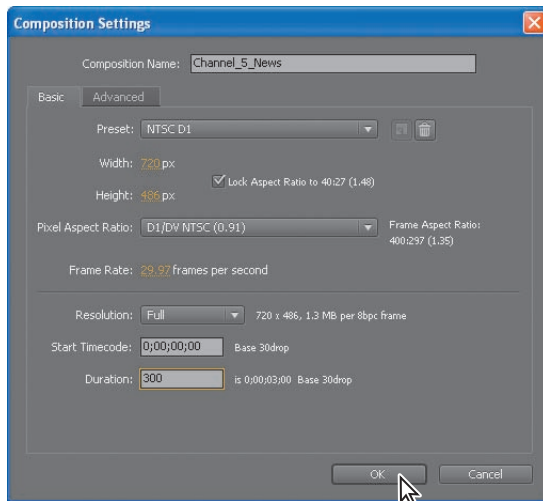


Adobe Bridge returns you to After Effects when you place the file. You can close Adobe Bridge if you'd like. You won't be using it again during this lesson.

Creating the composition

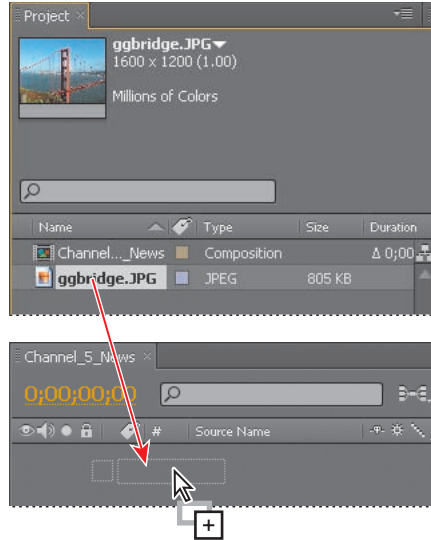
Following the After Effects workflow you learned in Lesson 1, the next step to building the TV news ID is to create a new composition. In Lesson 1, you created the composition based on footage items that were selected in the Project panel. You can also create an empty composition, and then add your footage items to it.

- 1 Create a new composition by doing one of the following:
 - Click the Create A New Composition button (📄) at the bottom of the Project panel.
 - Choose Composition > New Composition.
 - Press Ctrl+N (Windows) or Command+N (Mac OS).
- 2 In the Composition Settings dialog box, do the following:
 - Name the composition **Channel_5_News**.
 - Choose NTSC D1 from the Preset pop-up menu. NTSC D1 is the resolution for standard-definition television in the United States and some other countries. This preset automatically sets the width, height, pixel aspect ratio, and frame rate for the composition to NTSC standards.
 - In the Duration field, type **300** to specify 3 seconds.
 - Click OK.



After Effects displays an empty composition named Channel_5_News in the Composition panel and in the Timeline panel. Now, you'll add the background.

- 3 Drag the ggbridge.jpg footage item from the Project panel to the Timeline panel to add it to the Channel_5_News composition.



► **Tip:** The keyboard shortcut for fitting a layer to a composition is Ctrl+Alt+F (Windows) or Command+Option+F (Mac OS).

- 4 With the ggbridge layer selected in the Timeline panel, choose Layer > Transform > Fit To Comp to scale the background image to the dimensions of the composition.

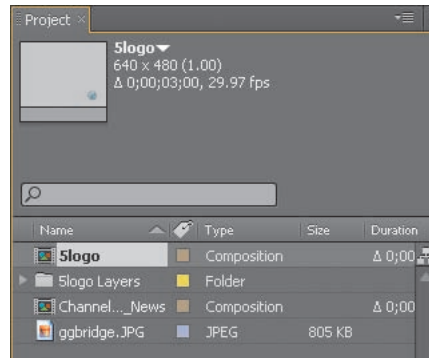


Importing the foreground element

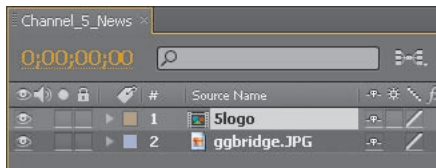
Your background is in place. The foreground object is a layered vector graphic that was created in Illustrator.

- 1 Choose File > Import > File.
- 2 In the Import File dialog box, navigate to the 5logo.ai file in the AECS4_CIB/Lessons/Lesson02/Assets folder. (The file appears as 5logo if you've hidden file extensions in Windows.)
- 3 Select Composition from the Import As menu, and then click Open.

The Illustrator file is added to the Project panel as a composition named 5logo. A folder named 5logo Layers also appears. This folder contains the three individual layers of the Illustrator file. Click the triangle to open the folder and see its contents if you'd like.



- 4 Drag the 5logo composition file from the Project panel into the Timeline panel above the ggbridge layer.

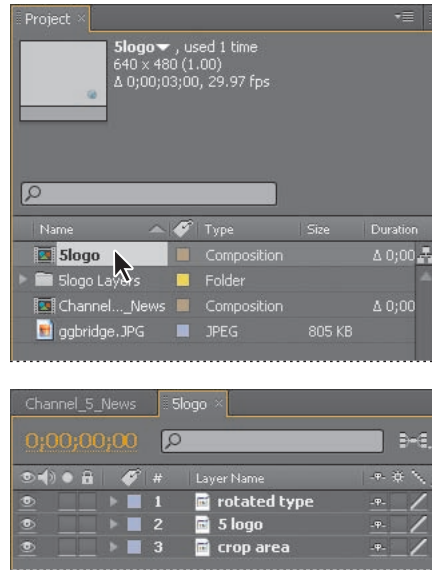


You should now see both the background image and the logo in the Composition panel and in the Timeline panel.

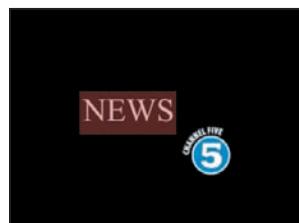
Working with imported Illustrator layers

The Channel 5 logo graphic was created in Illustrator; your job in After Effects is to add text and animate it for the station's newscast. To work with the layers of the Illustrator file independently of the background footage, you'll open the 5logo composition in its own Timeline and Composition panels.

- 1 Double-click the 5logo composition in the Project panel. The composition opens in its own Timeline and Composition panels.



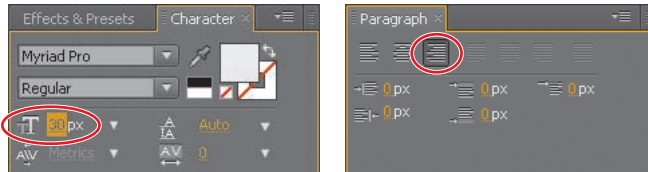
- 2 Select the Horizontal Type tool (T) in the Tools panel and click in the Composition panel to the left of the Channel 5 logo.
- 3 Type NEWS, all capitals, and then select all of the text you just entered.



- 4 In the Character panel, select a sans serif typeface such as Myriad Pro and change the Font Size to **30** pixels. Leave all other options in the Character panel at their defaults.
- 5 In the Paragraph panel, click the Right Align Text button (≡). Leave all other options in the Paragraph panel at their defaults. You'll learn more about working with text in Lesson 3, "Animating Text."

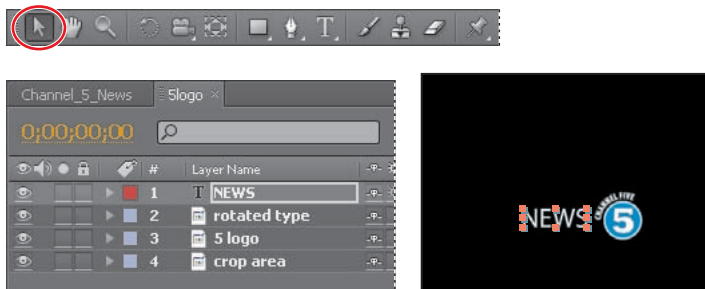
● **Note:** If the Character panel isn't open, choose Window > Character.

● **Note:** If the Paragraph panel isn't open, choose Window > Paragraph.



- 6 Select the Selection tool (☞), and then drag the text in the Composition panel to position it as it appears in the following figure. Notice that when you switch to the Selection tool, the generic Text 1 layer name in the Timeline panel changes to NEWS, the text you typed.

▶ **Tip:** Choose View > Show Grid to make the nonprinting grid visible to help you position objects. Choose View > Show Grid again to hide the grid when you're done.



Applying effects to a layer

Now you will return to the main composition, Channel_5_News, and apply an effect to the 5logo layer. This will apply the effect to all of the layers nested in the 5logo composition.

Applying and controlling effects

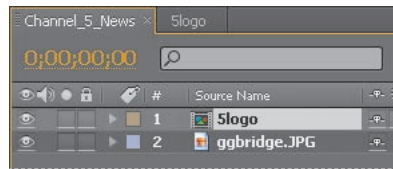
You can apply or remove an effect at any time. Once you've applied effects to a layer, you can temporarily turn off one or all the effects in the layer to concentrate on another aspect of your composition. Effects that are turned off do not appear in the Composition panel and typically are not included when the layer is previewed or rendered.

By default, when you apply an effect to a layer, the effect is active for the duration of the layer. However, you can make an effect start and stop at specific times, or make the effect more or less intense over time. You'll learn more about creating animation using keyframes or expressions in Lesson 5, "Animating a Multimedia Presentation," and Lesson 6, "Animating Layers."

You can apply and edit effects on adjustment layers just as you do with other layers. However, when you apply an effect to an adjustment layer, the effect is applied to all layers below it in the Timeline panel.

Effects can also be saved, browsed, and applied as animation presets.

- 1 Click the Channel_5_News tab in the Timeline panel, and select the 5logo layer. The effect you create next will be applied only to the logo elements, and not to the background image of the bridge.

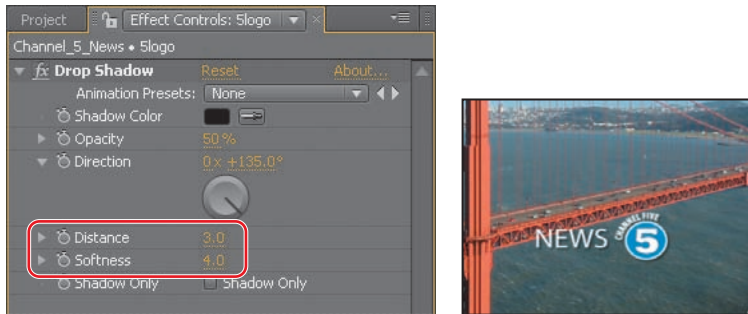


- 2 Choose Effect > Perspective > Drop Shadow. A soft-edged shadow appears behind the nested layers of the 5logo layer—the logo graphic, the rotated type, and the word *news*—in the Composition panel.



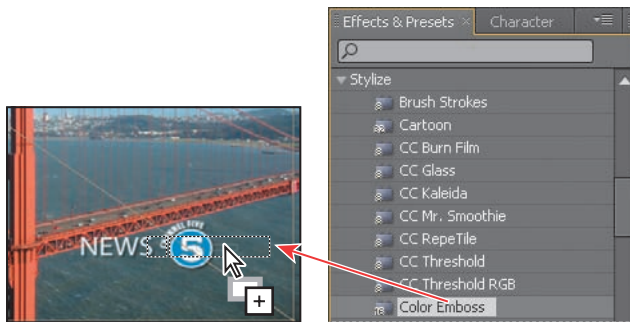
You can customize the effect using the Effect Controls panel, which appears in front of the Project panel when you apply an effect.

- 3 In the Effect Controls panel, reduce the drop shadow's Distance to 3 and increase its Softness to 4. You can set these values by clicking the field and typing the number, or by dragging the orange, underlined value.



The drop shadow is nice, but the logo will stand out even more if you apply an emboss effect. You can use either the Effect menu or the Effects & Presets panel to locate and apply effects.

- 4 Click the Effects & Presets tab to bring that panel forward. Then, click the triangle next to Stylize to expand the category.
- 5 With the 5logo layer selected in the Timeline panel, drag the Color Emboss effect into the Composition panel. The Color Emboss effect sharpens the edges of objects in the layer without suppressing the original colors. The Effect Controls panel displays the Color Emboss effect below the Drop Shadow effect.

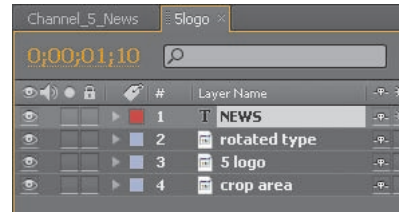


- 6 Choose File > Save to save your work.

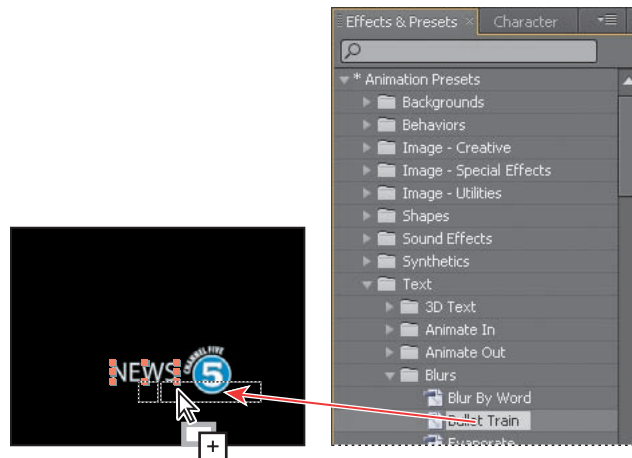
Applying an animation preset

You've positioned the news logo and applied some effects to it. It's time to add some animation. You will learn several ways to animate text in Lesson 3. For now, you'll use a simple animation preset that will fade the word *news* onto the screen next to the Channel 5 logo. You'll need to work in the 5logo composition so that you can apply the animation to only the NEWS text layer.

- 1 Click the 5logo tab in the Timeline panel, and select the NEWS layer.
- 2 Move the current-time indicator to 1:10, which is when you want the text to start fading in.



- 3 In the Effects & Presets panel, navigate to Animation Presets > Text > Blurs.
- 4 Drag the Bullet Train animation preset onto the NEWS layer in the Timeline panel or over the word *news* in the Composition panel. Don't worry about the text disappearing. You're looking at the first frame of the animation, which happens to be blank.



- 5 Click in a blank area of the Timeline panel to deselect the NEWS layer, and then drag the current-time indicator to 2:10 to manually preview the text animation. The text appears, letter by letter, until the word *news* is fully onscreen at 2:10.



Precomposing layers for a new animation

The news ID is coming along nicely, and you're probably eager to preview the complete animation. Before you do, however, you'll add a dissolve to all of the logo elements except the word *news*. To do this, you need to precompose the other three layers of the 5logo composition: rotated type, 5 logo, and crop area.

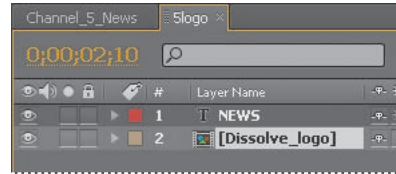
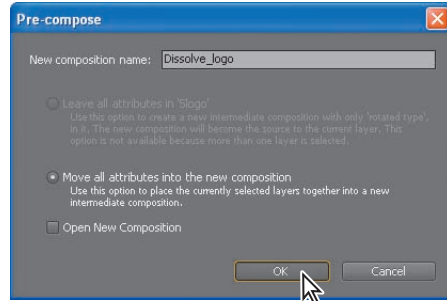
Precomposing is a way to nest layers within a composition. Precomposing moves the layers to a new composition. This new composition takes the place of the selected layers. When you want to change the order in which layer components are rendered, precomposing is a quick way to create intermediate levels of nesting in an existing hierarchy.

- 1 Shift-click to select the rotated type, 5 logo, and crop area layers in the 5logo Timeline panel.



- 2 Choose Layer > Pre-compose.

- 3 In the Pre-compose dialog box, name the new composition **Dissolve_logo**. The Move All Attributes Into The New Composition option is selected by default. Then, click OK.



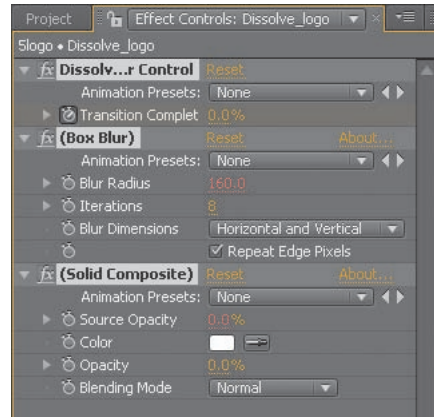
The three layers are replaced in the 5logo Timeline panel with a single layer, Dissolve_logo. This new, precomposed layer contains the three layers that you selected in step 1. You can apply the dissolve effect to it without affecting the NEWS text layer and its Bullet Train animation.

- 4 Make sure the Dissolve_logo layer is selected in the Timeline panel and press the Home key to go to 0:00.

► **Tip:** To locate the Dissolve – Vapor preset quickly, type **vap** in the search box in the Effects & Presets panel.

- 5 In the Effects & Presets panel, open the Animation Presets > Transitions – Dissolves category, and then drag the Dissolve – Vapor animation preset onto the Dissolve_logo layer in the Timeline panel or in the Composition panel.

The Dissolve – Vapor animation preset includes three components—a master dissolve, a box blur, and a solid composite, all of which appear in the Effect Controls panel. The default settings are fine for this project.



- 6 Choose File > Save.

Previewing the effects

It's time to preview all of the effects together.

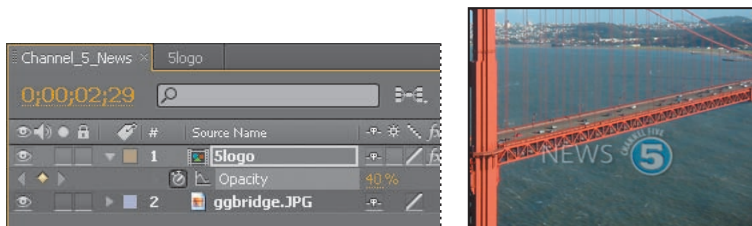
- 1 Click the Channel_5_News tab in the Timeline panel to switch to the main composition. Press the Home key to make sure you're at the beginning of the time ruler.
- 2 Make sure the Video switch (👁) is selected for both layers of the Channel_5_News Timeline panel.
- 3 Click the Play button (▶) in the Preview panel or press the spacebar to watch the preview. Press the spacebar to stop playback at any time.



Adding transparency

Many TV stations display logos semi-transparently in the corner of the frame to emphasize the brand. You'll reduce the opacity of the ID so that it can be used this way.

- 1 Still in the Channel_5_News Timeline panel, go to 2:24.
- 2 Select the 5logo layer and press T to display its Opacity property. By default, the Opacity is 100%—fully opaque. Click the stopwatch icon (🕒) to set an Opacity keyframe at this location.
- 3 Press the End key to go to the end of the time ruler (2:29), and change the Opacity to **40%**. After Effects adds a keyframe.



Now, the logo appears, the word *news* flies in, and it all fades to 40% opacity.

- 4 Watch a preview of your composition by clicking the Play button in the Preview panel, by pressing the spacebar, or by pressing 0 on your numeric keypad. Press the spacebar to stop playback when you're done.
- 5 Choose File > Save to save your project.

Rendering the composition

You're ready to prepare your Channel 5 news ID for output. When you create output, the layers of a composition and each layer's masks, effects, and properties are rendered frame by frame into one or more output files or, in the case of a sequence, into a series of consecutive files.

Making a movie from your final composition can take a few minutes or many hours, depending on the composition's frame size, quality, complexity, and compression method. When you place your composition in the render queue, it becomes a render item that uses the render settings assigned to it. While After Effects renders the item, you are unable to work in the program.

After Effects provides a variety of formats and compression types for rendering output; the format you choose depends on the medium from which you'll play your final output or on the requirements of your hardware, such as a video-editing system. You will prepare this animation for two formats so that it can be used for broadcast purposes as well as on a website.

● **Note:** For more about output formats and rendering, see Lesson 14, "Rendering and Outputting."

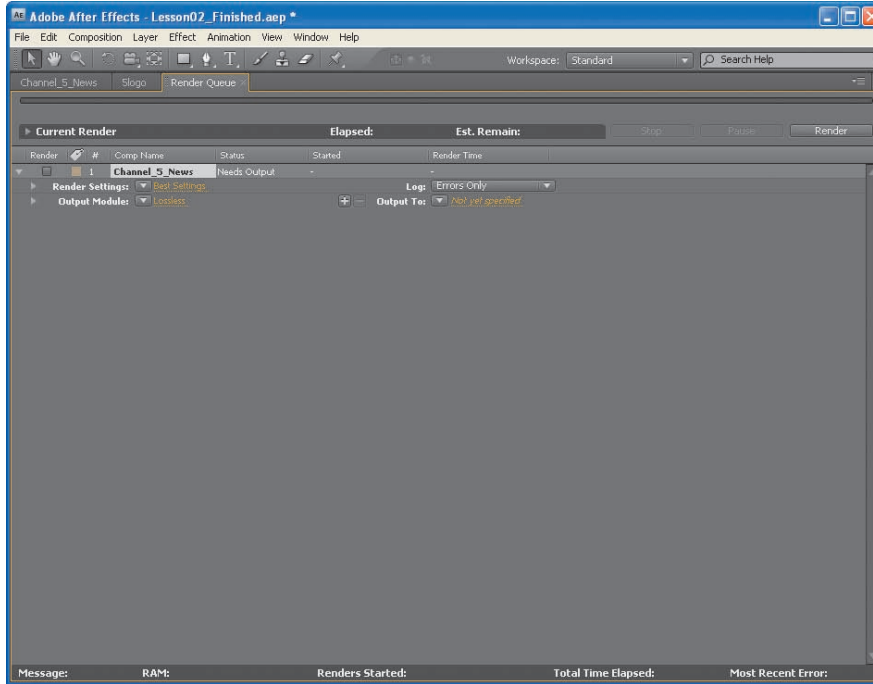
Exporting broadcast-quality output

You'll start by rendering and exporting the composition so that it can be broadcast on television.

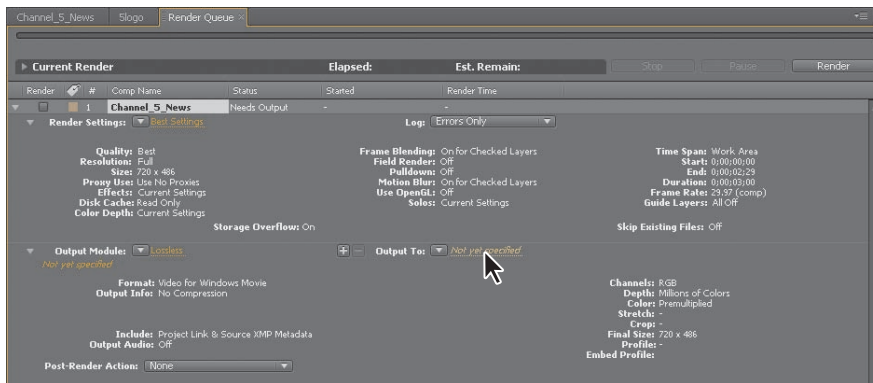
- 1 Do one of the following to add the composition to the render queue:
 - Select the Channel_5_News composition in the Project panel, and then choose Composition > Add to Render Queue. The Render Queue panel opens automatically.
 - Choose Window > Render Queue to open the Render Queue panel, and then drag the Channel_5_News composition from the Project panel onto the Render Queue panel.

- 2 Choose Maximize Frame from the Render Queue panel menu so that the panel fills the application window.

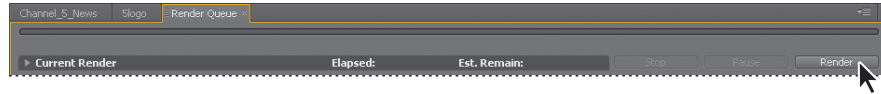
► **Tip:** The keyboard shortcut for the Maximize Frame command is the accent grave (`) character, which shares a key with the tilde (~) character.



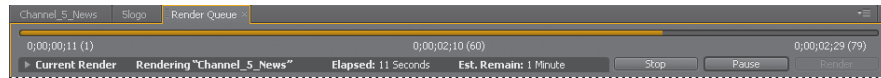
- 3 Click the triangle to expand the Render Settings options. By default, After Effects renders compositions at the Best Quality and Full Resolution. The default settings are fine for this project.
- 4 Click the triangle to expand the Output Module options. By default, After Effects uses lossless compression to encode the rendered composition into a movie file, which is fine for this project. However, you need to identify where to save the file.
- 5 Click the underlined words *Not Yet Specified* next to the Output To pop-up menu.



- 6 In the Output Movie To dialog box, accept the default movie name (Channel_5_News), select the AECS4_CIB/Lessons/Lesson02/Finished_Project folder for the location, and then click Save.
- 7 Back in the Render Queue panel, click the Render button.



After Effects displays a progress bar in the Render Queue panel as it encodes the file, and issues an audio alert when all items in the Render Queue have been rendered and encoded.



- 8 When the movie is complete, choose Restore Frame Size from the Render Queue panel menu to restore your workspace.

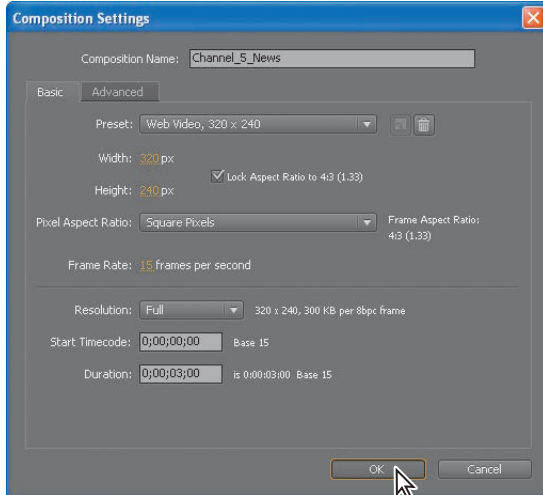
Exporting a composition for the web

The production manager at Channel 5 wants to use this news ID on the station's website, as well. For that purpose, you need to render and export the composition in SWF format. The SWF format is a widely used vector graphics and animation format for the web. It is a compact, binary format that can contain audio and vector objects. Web browsers with the Flash Player plug-in can play SWF files.

Before exporting to SWF, you need to adjust the composition a bit for online display.

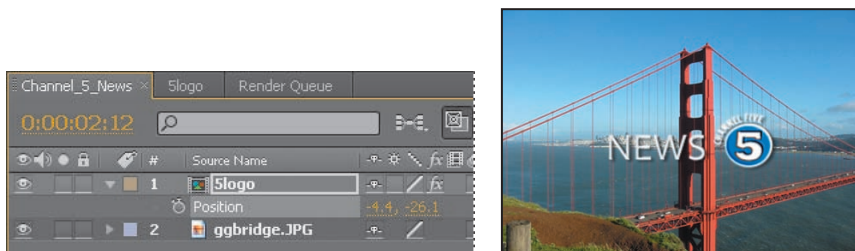
- 1 Select the Channel_5_News composition in the Project panel, and then choose Composition > Composition Settings.

- 2 In the Basic tab of the Composition Settings dialog box, choose Web Video, 320 x 240 from the Preset menu, and then click OK.



After Effects applies the new web-appropriate resolution—320 x 240 pixels—to the composition. As a result, both the background and 5logo layers are about twice as big as the composition, which is now smaller, has a different aspect ratio, and has a different frame rate (15 fps). So you need to reposition and resize the layers for the new output medium, including centering the logo in the composition.

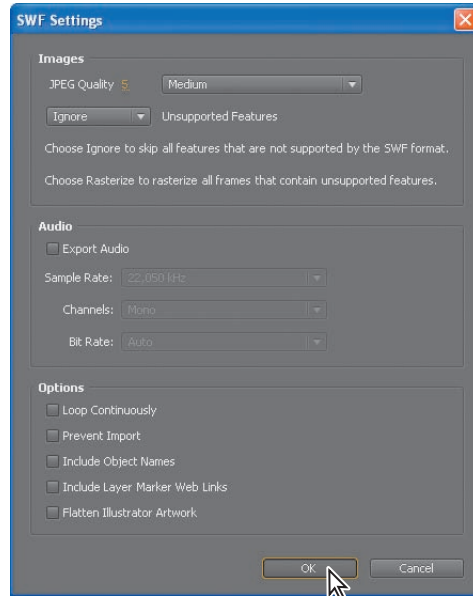
- 3 Open the Channel_5_News Timeline panel, select the ggbridge layer, and press Ctrl+Alt+F (Windows) or Command+Option+F (Mac OS) to fit the layer to the composition size.
- 4 Go to 2:12, which is when the logo starts to fade in at the new frame rate.
- 5 Select the 5logo layer in the Timeline panel, and then press **P** to reveal its Position property.
- 6 Change the Position values to **-4.4, -26.1** to center the logo in the composition.



Now, you're ready to render and export the composition to SWF format.

● **Note:** SWF files can be played directly by Flash Player. The Flash Video (FLV) command in the Export submenu saves video content so that it can be published online, but it must be embedded in a SWF file to be played by Flash Player.

- 7 With the Channel_5_News composition selected in the Project panel, choose File > Export > Adobe Flash Player (SWF).
- 8 In the Save File As dialog box, accept the default filename (Channel_5_News.swf), select the AECS4_CIB/Lessons/Lesson02/Finished_Project folder for the location, and then click Save.
- 9 In the SWF Settings dialog box, select Medium from the JPEG Quality menu. This setting preserves image quality nicely but also reduces the file size somewhat. Leave all other settings at their defaults, and then click OK.



● **Note:** After Effects exports text layers to SWF as vector graphics. Some layer types and layer switches are not supported, such as 3D Layers, 3D Cameras, and 3D Lights. Nested layers are rasterized. For more on SWF export, see After Effects Help.

After Effects displays a progress bar as it renders the file and exports it to SWF format. It also saves a report in HTML to the same folder as the SWF file.

- 10 Choose File > Save to save the final file.
- 11 In Explorer (Windows) or the Finder (Mac OS), navigate to the AECS4_CIB/Lessons/Lesson02/Finished_Project folder.
- 12 Double-click the HTML file to open it in your default web browser, and preview the SWF file by clicking the link on the page. This Flash animation could be used as part of a splash screen on the TV station's website, or as part of an ad, for example.

Congratulations. You've created a broadcast news show ID and watermark.

Review questions

- 1 How do you use Adobe Bridge to preview and import files?
- 2 What is *precomposing*?
- 3 How do you customize an effect?
- 4 How do you modify the transparency of a layer in a composition?

Review answers

- 1 Choose File > Browse In Bridge to jump from After Effects to Adobe Bridge, where you can search for and preview image assets. When you locate the asset you want to use in an After Effects project, double-click it or drag it to the Project panel.
- 2 *Precomposing* is a way to nest layers within a composition. Precomposing moves the layers to a new composition, which takes the place of the selected layers. When you want to change the order in which layer components are rendered, precomposing is a quick way to create intermediate levels of nesting in an existing hierarchy.
- 3 After you apply an effect to a layer in a composition, you can customize its properties in the Effect Controls panel. This panel opens automatically when you apply the effect, or you can open it at any time by selecting the layer with the effect and choosing Window > Effect Controls.
- 4 To modify the transparency of a layer, reduce its opacity. Select the layer in the Timeline panel, press T to reveal its Opacity property, and enter a value lower than 100%.