

After Effects Introduction & Hotkeys

Learning After Effects, and becoming really good in After Effects is maybe the best gateway drug to creative visual applications. If you use it a lot, you'll learn a ton about editing, graphics, layout, 3D, compositing, scripting to make your life easier, templating, workflow management and optimization, render farms, what's possible with plugins, and color correction (to name just a few). These things have other suites of programs dedicated to just that one thing. The skills you learn in AE will translate to these other programs and vice versa. In some cases, AE is better than its competition or sister programs. Good example of that? AE is 10x better at keying out backgrounds than Photoshop. It's also got a much better suite of color correction. So I find myself sometimes using AE to do select work that I used to do in Photoshop.

I've probably logged more flight hours in After Effects than any other program. I'm a utilitarian expert and can do spec work, I'm just not good enough to make sick marketing animations for social media under creative directors who say "make it pop." Usually my work in AE is clean-up, finishing, post supervision animatics, compositing, or content templates for complex multi-channel media projects. I sometimes use it to make things for my creative practice, but it's been a while.

Hotkeys

After Effects shortcuts are *critical* to a speedy workflow. Here are some of my favorites - oh, and you can easily create your own, too!

Shift, Command, and Option are all modifier keys.

The below shortcut keys are for Mac, but if you substitute Command (⌘) for Control, they should work on Windows as well.

Overall	
⌘ + Option + ;	App settings
⌘ + 0-9	Workspace Panels
`	Make selected panel full-window

	Shift + ~	Collapse / Expand selected panel
Timeline Navigation and Controls		
	I/O	Go to in, go to out
	B/N	Set In, Set Out
	Page Up / Page Down ⌘ + ← / ⌘ + →	Move the timeline indicator Forward and Back a Frame (hold shift and the hotkey to advance 10 frames or reverse 10 frames)
	⌘ + ↑ / ⌘ + ↓	Select layer above / below
	⌘ + Option + ↑ / ⌘ + Option + ↓	Move layer up / down in stacking order
	Option + Page Up / Option + Page Down	Nudge a layer forward / back 1 frame
Keyframe		
	S	Scale
	P	Position
	R	Rotation
	T	Opacity
	EE	Expose Expressions
	U	Expose all variables with keyframes
Misc		
	⌘ + Shift + /	Add to Render Queue
	⌘ + K	Comp Settings
	⌘ + /	Add selected item to comp (from project window)

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