

Adobe After Effects Cheatsheet

A quick reference guide to Adobe After Effects, covering essential tools, shortcuts, effects, and expressions to enhance your motion graphics and video editing workflow.



Interface & Basic Navigation

Workspace Basics

Project Panel:

 Import and organize footage, compositions, and other assets.

Composition Panel:

 Preview and manipulate the elements within a composition.

Timeline Panel:

• Arrange layers, apply effects, and control animation over time.

Tools Panel:

• Access essential tools for creating and modifying elements.

Navigation Shortcuts

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Composition Settings

Access:

*Composition > Composition Settings... or Ctrl + K

Key Settings:

- **Preset:** Choose from standard video formats (e.g., HDTV 1080 24).
- Width/Height: Define the composition dimensions in pixels.
- Pixel Aspect Ratio: Usually Square Pixels for digital video.
- **Frame Rate:** Frames per second (fps). 24fps for film look, 30fps for standard video.
- Duration: Total length of the composition.
- **Background Color:** Set the initial background color.

Keyframing & Animation

Basic Keyframing

- 1. Select a Layer: Choose the layer you want to animate.
- 2. Reveal Properties: Press P (Position), S (Scale), R (Rotation), T (Opacity), or A (Anchor Point) to reveal the corresponding property.
- 3. Enable Keyframing: Click the stopwatch icon next to the property to create the first keyframe.
- 4. Move the Timeline: Advance the current time indicator to a new point in the timeline.
- 5. Adjust the Property: Change the value of the property at the new time. This creates a second keyframe.

After Effects automatically interpolates between keyframes, creating the animation.

Keyframe Types

Linear Value changes at a constant Keyframes: rate. Easy Ease Smooth acceleration and Keyframes: deceleration. F9 or Right-click > Keyframe Assistant > Easy Ease. Easy Ease In Slows down as it approaches Keyframes: the keyframe. Shift + F9 or Right-click > Keyframe Assistant > Easy Ease In. Easy Ease Out Speeds up as it leaves the Keyframes: keyframe. Ctrl + Shift + F9 or Right-click > Keyframe Assistant > Easy Ease Out. Hold Value remains constant until the Keyframes: next keyframe. Right-click > Keyframe Assistant > Hold.

Graph Editor

The Graph Editor allows you to fine-tune animation curves for more precise control.

Value Graph: Adjust the value of a property over time.

Speed Graph: Adjust the rate of change of a property over time.

Use handles on the curves to modify the interpolation between keyframes.

Animation Shortcuts

U	Show all keyframed properties.
Ctrl + Alt + T	Add Time Remapping.
Alt + [or]	Trim Layer start/end to current time.
Home / End	Go to start/end of the Composition.

Effects & Presets

Applying Effects

- 1. Select a Layer: Choose the layer to which you want to apply an effect.
- Effects & Presets Panel: Find the desired effect in the Effects & Presets panel (Window > Effects & Presets).
- Apply the Effect: Double-click the effect, drag it onto the layer, or select Layer > Effect
 > [Effect Category] > [Effect Name].
- 4. Adjust Effect Settings: Modify the effect's parameters in the Effect Controls panel.

Common Effects

Blur & Sharpen:	Gaussian Blur, Unsharp Mask.
Color Correction:	Levels, Curves, Hue/Saturation, Color Balance.
Distort:	Warp, Twirl, Wave Warp.
Generate:	Gradient Ramp, Fill, Stroke.
Keying:	Keylight (for green screen), Color Key.
Stylize:	Glow, Find Edges, Mosaic.

Effect Presets

Effect Presets are pre-configured combinations of effects that can be applied to layers.

Applying Presets:

- Find presets in the Effects & Presets panel.
- Double-click a preset to apply it to the selected layer.

Creating Presets:

- Apply and configure effects on a layer.
- Select Animation > Save Animation Preset...

Expressions

Basic Expressions

Expressions are snippets of code that can be used to automate and link properties in After Effects.

Accessing Expressions:

• Alt-click the stopwatch icon next to a property to enable expressions.

Common	Expression	Examp	les
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time	Returns the current composition time in seconds. Useful for creating continuously changing values.
<pre>random(min, max)</pre>	Generates a random number between min and max.
<pre>loopOut (type="c ycle", numKeyfr ames=0)</pre>	Loops the animation. type can be "cycle", "pingpong", or "offset". numKeyframes specifies the number of keyframes to loop. Default is 0 (all keyframes).
<pre>wiggle(freq, amp)</pre>	Randomly shakes the property value. freq is the frequency of the wiggle (wiggles per second), and amp is the amplitude (amount of wiggle).
transfo rm.rotat ion	Refers to the rotation property of the layer. You can link properties between layers using this.

Linking Properties with Expressions

You can link properties of different layers using expressions.

- 1. **Pick Whip:** Use the pick whip tool (the spiral icon next to the expression field) to drag a connection to another layer's property.
- 2. Manual Linking: Type the layer name and property directly into the expression, e.g., thisComp.layer("Layer Name").transform.position