

Getting Started

Welcome to Adobe® After Effects®—a powerful software tool for visual-effects and motion graphics. From commercial video and motion picture postproduction to CD-ROM title development, Adobe After Effects provides the tools you need to create dynamic designs. You can composite multiple layers, animate an unlimited number of elements, and apply visual effects.

About Classroom in a Book

Adobe After Effects 4.0 Classroom in a Book® is part of the official training series for Adobe graphics and publishing software developed by experts at Adobe Systems. The lessons are designed to help you learn at your own pace. If you're new to Adobe After Effects, you'll understand the fundamental concepts and features you'll need to master the program. If you've been using After Effects for a while, you'll find *Adobe After Effects 4.0 Classroom in a Book* teaches many advanced features, including tips and techniques for using this latest version.

Although each lesson provides step-by-step instructions for creating a specific project, there's room for exploration and experimentation. You can follow the book from start to finish, or do only the lessons that correspond to your interests and needs. Each lesson concludes with a review section summarizing what you've covered.

Prerequisites

Before beginning to use *Adobe After Effects 4.0 Classroom in a Book*, you should have a working knowledge of your computer and its operating conventions. You should know how to use the mouse and standard menus and commands. You should also know how to open, save, and close files. If you need to review these techniques, see the documentation that comes with your system.

Although it is not necessary, you will find it helpful if you have experience with Adobe Illustrator®, Adobe Photoshop®, and Adobe Premiere®.

Checking system requirements

To complete the lessons in After Effects Classroom in a Book, your system must meet or exceed the following requirements.

Windows system requirements

For Windows systems, you should have the following components:

- Intel® Pentium® processor.
- Microsoft® Windows® 98 or later version or Windows NT® 4.0 or later.
- At least 32 MB of random-access memory (RAM) for Windows 98 and at least 64 MB of RAM for Windows NT.
- At least 80 MB of available hard disk space for installation. You'll need additional space to work with large files.
- 16-bit (or greater) color display adapter.
- Double-speed or faster CD-ROM drive.
- QuickTime® 3.0 (or a later version).

The following are recommended:

- Pentium II or multiprocessor system (Windows NT only).
- Windows NT 4.0 (or a later version).
- 64 MB or more of RAM.
- 500 MB or larger hard disk or hard disk array.
- Video capture card.
- 24-bit (or greater) color display adapter.
- A sound card (if your video capture card does not contain on-board sound circuitry).

Note: To complete Lesson 7, which involves very large files, you will need at least 128 MB of RAM installed on your Windows system.

Mac OS system requirements

For a Mac OS system, you should have the following components:

- Apple® Power Macintosh® computer.
- Mac OS version 7.6.1 (or a later version).
- At least 32 MB of application RAM.
- At least 80 MB of available hard disk space for installation. You'll need additional space to work with large files.
- 16-bit (or greater) color display adapter.
- Double-speed or faster CD-ROM drive.
- QuickTime 3.0 (or a later version).

The following are recommended:

- 64 MB or more of application RAM.
- 500 MB or larger hard disk or hard disk array.
- Video capture card.
- 24-bit color display adapter.
- Two monitors with accelerated 24-bit video.

Installing Adobe After Effects

You must purchase the Adobe After Effects software separately. To install the application, follow the instructions in “Getting Started” in the *Adobe After Effects 4.0 User Guide*.

Adobe After Effects 4.0 is sold in two different configurations: The standard version of After Effects 4.0, and the Adobe After Effects 4.0 Production Bundle, which includes everything in the standard version, plus additional plug-ins tailored specifically for film and video professionals. These plug-ins include more advanced motion controls, keying effects, distortion effects, and device controls. The Production Bundle comes with a hardware key, which is required for using the Production Bundle software.

Installing Production Bundle plug-ins

If you haven't purchased the Production Bundle version of Adobe After Effects, the After Effects Classroom in a Book CD-ROM contains several samples of professional plug-ins for you to try during the course of the lessons. You will need to install these in your Adobe After Effects Plug-ins folder. These plug-ins do not require a hardware key.

Do not install the sample plug-ins if you are using the Production Bundle version of Adobe After Effects.

To install the sample plug-ins:

Copy the contents of the Plug_ins folder from the After Effects Classroom in a Book CD-ROM to the Plug-ins\Standard\Effects folder in the folder in which you installed After Effects on your hard disk.

Installing QuickTime 3.0 (or later) and MoviePlayer 2.1 (or later)

QuickTime 3.0 is required to play the QuickTime movies you create in Adobe After Effects on both Macintosh and Windows systems. To play sound on a Windows system, you need a sound card and speakers.

If QuickTime is not already on your system, see "Getting Started" in the *Adobe After Effects 4.0 User Guide* for instructions on locating and installing the application.

QuickTime is included on the Adobe After Effects application CD-ROM.

Note: *You must install QuickTime to play the final movies you create in the After Effects Classroom in a Book.*

Using the Classroom in a Book files

The After Effects Classroom in a Book CD-ROM includes folders containing all the electronic files for the After Effects Classroom in a Book lessons. Each lesson has its own folder.

You should first try going through the lessons without copying files from the CD-ROM to your hard disk. If you find that some actions are too slow, you can copy the files from that particular lesson to your hard disk.

The size of each lesson folder is listed below so that you can make sure sufficient disk space is available before you copy them.

Projects	Size
Tour	42.5 MB
01Lesson	22.2 MB
02Lesson	13.5 MB
03Lesson	12.2 MB
04Lesson	64.6 MB
05Lesson	59.8 MB
06Lesson	14.9 MB
07Lesson	394.0 MB

To install the After Effects Classroom in a Book folders:

- 1 Create a folder on your hard disk, and name it Adobe After Effects CIB.
- 2 Copy the lesson folders from the CD-ROM into this folder.

Completed project files

Each lesson folder contains a completed project file for the lesson. Use these files as a reference if you get stuck in any part of the project. Every project file is locked to prevent you from accidentally making any changes to it. When you open a project file, you may see a prompt that some of the files have changed. This occurs if you copied the files to your hard disk. Simply click OK to open the project.

In addition, each lesson folder contains the completed QuickTime movie for the lesson. To play the movie, double-click the file to open MoviePlayer®.

Creating a Projects folder for work files

Create a folder called Projects on your hard disk. Each lesson in this book includes directions for creating a work file and saving it in this folder. This keeps your work files separate from the project elements.

Image files

The image files on the After Effects Classroom in a Book CD-ROM are all under copyright and may not be distributed.

Restoring default preferences

The preferences file controls how palettes and command settings appear on your screen when you open the Adobe After Effects program. Each time you exit from Adobe After Effects, the position of the palettes and certain command settings are recorded in the preferences file. If you want to restore the palettes to their original default settings, you can delete the current Adobe After Effects preferences file. (Adobe After Effects creates a preferences file if one doesn't already exist the next time you start the program and save a file.)

Important: *If you want to save the current settings, rename the preferences file rather than throwing it away. When you are ready to restore the settings, change the name back and make sure that the file is located in the Prefs folder in the folder in which you installed After Effects (Windows) or the Preferences folder in the System folder (Mac OS).*


1 Locate the AEPrefs.txt file in the Prefs folder in the folder in which you installed After Effects (Windows) or the After Effects Prefs file in the Preferences folder in the System folder (Mac OS).

If you can't find the file, choose Find from the Start menu and then choose Files or Folders (Windows), or choose Find from the desktop File menu (Mac OS). Type **AEPrefs** or **After Effects Prefs** in the text box, and click Find Now (Windows) or Find (Mac OS).

Note: *If you still can't find the file, you probably haven't started Adobe After Effects for the first time yet. The preferences file is created after you quit the program the first time, and it's updated thereafter.*

2 Delete or rename the AEPrefs.txt file (Windows) or the After Effects Prefs file (Mac OS).

3 Start Adobe After Effects.

 *To locate and delete the After Effects preferences file quickly each time you begin a new project, create a shortcut (Windows) or an alias (Mac OS) for the appropriate folder.*

Lesson strategies

You may find it helpful to read through the entire lesson before you begin creating the project. Several of the projects are quite complex, so you may also want to arrange your time so that you can complete an entire lesson in one sitting.

Rendering QuickTime movies

At the end of each lesson, you will have a complete project that is ready to be *rendered*, or compiled, into a QuickTime movie. Rendering a movie can take anywhere from a couple of minutes to many hours, depending on the size of the files, the complexity of the project, the type of computer you are working on, the amount of RAM you have, and the compression method you are using.

Because of this, you should structure your time so that you can finish a lesson and then leave your computer free to render the movie, possibly overnight or while you are away from your system. You can work in other applications while a movie is rendering, but it will reduce the speed of your system.

Several lessons provide instructions on how to create a *draft* movie, a smaller, lower-quality movie that renders faster, and allows you to see quicker results. Each lesson folder also contains a completed movie file.

Special bonus section

At the end of the After Effects Classroom in a Book is an appendix called “Technical Information,” which includes information on many of the technical aspects of preparing and rendering movies for video and film. It includes detailed information on video interlacing, frame rate, audio, film, and more. Read it at your leisure, or refer to it as you make your way through the lessons in the After Effects Classroom in a Book.

Additional resources

Adobe After Effects 4.0 Classroom in a Book is not meant to replace documentation provided with the program. Only the commands and options used in the lessons are explained in this book. For comprehensive information about program features, refer to these resources:

- *Adobe After Effects 4.0 User Guide*. All aspects of the application are covered in detail.
- *After Effects 4.0 Production Bundle Guide* (if you have purchased the Production Bundle version of After Effects).
- After Effects Tour Movie, available on the Classroom in a Book CD-ROM.
- Quick Reference Card, a useful companion as you work through the lessons in this book.

Adobe certification

The Adobe Training and Certification Programs are designed to help Adobe customers improve and promote their product proficiency skills. The Adobe Certified Expert (ACE) program is designed to recognize the high-level skills of expert users. Adobe Certified Training Providers (ACTP) use only Adobe Certified Experts to teach Adobe software classes. Available in either ACTP classrooms or on site, the ACE program is the best way to master Adobe products. For Adobe Certified Training Programs information, visit the Partnering with Adobe Web site at partners.adobe.com.