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How to Make a Movie Using Adobe Premiere

A beginner's guide to using Adobe Premiere, as well as editing tips and tricks

Table of Contents

[Introduction 3](#_Toc89892485)

[What is Adobe Premiere 3](#_Toc89892486)

[Why you should use it 3](#_Toc89892487)

[What is this guide 3](#_Toc89892488)

[Organization 4](#_Toc89892489)

[How to start a new project 4](#_Toc89892490)

[Organization 4](#_Toc89892491)

[Sequencing 4](#_Toc89892492)

[Titles 5](#_Toc89892493)

[How to Create a Title Sequence 5](#_Toc89892494)

[Customizing Attributes 5](#_Toc89892495)

[Color 6](#_Toc89892496)

[Accessing your tools 6](#_Toc89892497)

[White Balance 6](#_Toc89892498)

[Color Wheels 7](#_Toc89892499)

[Consistency 7](#_Toc89892500)

[Sound 8](#_Toc89892501)

[Intro 8](#_Toc89892502)

[Reading your audio levels 8](#_Toc89892503)

[Leveling out 8](#_Toc89892504)

[Audio effects 9](#_Toc89892505)

[Exporting 9](#_Toc89892506)

[Process 9](#_Toc89892507)

[Settings to use 9](#_Toc89892508)

[Conclusion 10](#_Toc89892509)

[Index 10](#_Toc89892510)

# Introduction

## What is Adobe Premiere

What do the movies Deadpool, Gone Girl, and Terminator: Dark Fate all have in common? They were created in most part, with Adobe Premiere, the video editing program that comes with Adobe Creative Cloud. While expensive production crews use the Creative Cloud, the series of programs can be used by anyone for a $52.99 monthly fee. Compared to other software I've used like Avid, Final Cut, and Windows Movie Maker, Premiere is by far my favorite because of its intuitive tools, seamless interface, and customizable structure. This relatively cheap barrier to entry, combined with the simplicity of use, has allowed people to make their own content at home.

## Why you should use it

Some people are so proficient at videomaking that they make their whole living by creating content. Many people nowadays make money by streaming and creating their own content. Gaining views and likes on platforms like YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram will vastly increase your online presence, and thus your fame. The process of video production, like most other professions, has been simplified thanks to the powerful technology we have today.

Gaining experience and proficiency in Adobe Premiere opens many opportunities for you and your career, regardless of your profession. Most companies need media marketing, training videos, and promotional material. If you're politically inclined, every candidate needs campaign ads, especially at the local level. In this job market, where technology slowly consolidates all aspects of every field, having video editing experience will give you an advantage over the competition.

## What is this guide

This helpful tutorial aims to give newcomers who are curious about making their first movie some tips and tricks to make their work the best it can be. My guide is also useful for those who may have prior videomaking experience. With practice and patience, you could make something that, 40 years ago, would have taken the efforts of ten different people. If you choose to create a new video using this guide, you will find there are many options presented to you that this guide will not discuss. This is to ensure as easy a learning experience for beginners as possible.

This is not a guide to preproduction and on-set production. While prior knowledge of storyboards, lighting, and shot composition are important, it is not required for the purposes of this tutorial. Take out your phone, hold it horizontally, and capture a few video clips for practice use. This guide will not extensively cover Adobe Premiere's compatibility with other Creative Cloud software, like After Effects and Audition. While mastering these complementary programs is important, it essential to master what Premiere has to offer before you get to the point where its relatively limited options become a hinderance to your work.

# Organization

## How to start a new project

If you're reading this tutorial, you have either already captured your footage on your camera's memory card or have received your footage remotely. Either way, the steps for transferring these clips to your computer are largely the same. Here, we will walk through the steps you'll take to start your project.

**Recommended:** Purchase an external hard drive and operate off that. Raw footage and other files can take up immense amounts of space. You are also less susceptible to bugs and crashes if you work only from one drive. Having all your projects and related files on a portable drive also allows you to open them on other computers.

1. When you first open Adobe Premiere, you should be presented with a screen that reads "Welcome to Premiere Pro". On the upper left corner, you will see the options **New Project** and **Open Project**.
2. Select **New Project** and a new window where you can name your project will appear.
3. Name your project. Underneath that option is a tab titled **Location**.
4. Select **Browse** to the right and set your location to your desired hard drive.
5. Keep all project files on the same drive for easier organization.
6. Once you have selected your drive, click down to **Scratch Disks** and make sure all your settings are set to **Same as Project**.
7. Select **OK** at the bottom of your window.

## Importing Video Clips

You will now be taken to the main interface, which at this point is made up of five distinct panels. Their locations and sizes can all be adjusted to your preference. Pay attention to the lower left one first, it will be where your clips and audio files can be accessed and easily moved.

First, you will import your video clips. To do this, follow the steps below.

1. Click over the option with your **Project: Name** and then right click.
2. Select **New Bin** and title it 'Clips'. Doing this will ensure your new bin exists within the main project bin.
3. Double click on the bin **Clips** to access it. It will be empty.
4. Right click and select **Import**
5. Select your clips from their locations and click **Open**.

Make sure your video clips all share the same resolution and frame rate, otherwise you will see inconsistencies in the quality of your footage.

## Sequencing

Now that your clips are in your bin, take note of the panel to the right. This is where your timeline is, where you will put your video and audio files together like a puzzle. Most video clips will automatically have audio attached to them, due to the increased usage of built-in mics on consumer cameras and phones.

1. Click and hold your desired clip to the right,
2. Drag it to the right and release once over the timeline. This will create a sequence. Your audio and video clip will appear as two blue bars under **V1** and **V2**.
3. You will see several icons to the left of the timeline. Select the top one titled **Selection Tool** to put your cursor into a 'default' like mode.
4. Now that your selection tool is highlighted, mouse over your clip as visualized in the timeline.
5. Hovering over the edge will change your cursor into a red arrow. This indicates you can adjust the length of your clip.
6. Hold down left click and drag to the left and right to shorten or lengthen it.

There are several icons below the 'Selection Tool' which all have their uses in organizing clips and navigating the timeline including the following.

* **Track Forward Select Tool** highlights all clips your mouse is on and those ahead of it.
* **Ripple Edit Tool** below it lets you adjust the length of one clip without overlapping the length of surrounding footage. This will extend the length of your overall project.
* **Razor** **Tool** acts as a cutting tool, letting you split a clip in two.

Below is a list of shortcuts for all the icons next to your timeline.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Key** | **Icon** |
| V | Selection Tool |
| A | Track Select Forward Tool |
| B | Ripple Edit Tool |
| C | Razor Tool |
| Y | Slip Tool |
| P | Pen Tool |
| H | Hand Tool |
| T | Type Tool |

# Titles

## Creating a Title Sequence

Now that you have created a basic sequence of clips in your timeline, it is time to give your project a title.

1. First, look up to the top left corner where you see **File**, **Edit**, **Clip**, etc. Select **Window** and then among the many options you will see **Essential Graphics**. Click on this to open a new window on your farthest right panel.
2. In this window, you will see many different options full of preset graphics and animations. Locate the search bar near the top of this panel and type in 'titles'. You will be presented with a variety of title options.
3. Select your desired preset then drag and drop it into your sequence. It will appear as a pink bar under '**V2**' on your timeline. Treat it as another video layer.

## Customizing Attributes

It's now time to adjust your text, font, and colors.

1. Select your title clip in your timeline, it will be highlighted white when selected. Make sure that in your timeline, your playback cursor is over that clip.
2. Select the cursor that looks like a capital T on the left part of this panel. This is your **Type Tool**.
3. Hover over your text on your screen and click. You can now edit your title to anything you wish.
4. Once you have chosen your title, look toward the rightmost panel and you should see several options for editing it further under the **Essential Graphics** window.
5. Click on your text and more options will appear on the panel. Among these are options to change the position, angle, and color of your text.
6. For now, play around with these options until you are satisfied with the way your title looks.

Your title will have a black background, unless it was placed over one of your video clips. If you wish to change the background color of your title, you will need to place a video clip of a static color below it.

1. To do this, right click on the lower left panel where your project bins are located. From the menu, select **New Item** and you will see a host of options.
2. To set a simple color background, select **Color Matte** and then choose your color. It will appear as a 5 second video clip.
3. Drag this clip below your title.

**Recommended:** Your title text should be V2 while the background should be in V1. Your top layer will always be shown above your bottom layers. This matte will also appear as a pink bar.

If you choose a title preset with animations, you will need to render it to make it play smoothly on your timeline.

1. To render your footage, mouse up to the upper left corner of your screen where you see **Sequence**. Click to reveal several options for rendering.
2. Most of the time, you should select **Render in to out** as this will render everything in your timeline. Get into the habit of rendering and saving often.

# Color

## Accessing your tools

Color editing your video will give your audience a much better impression of your work. Whether it's correcting some white balancing or exposure issues, to more stylistic choices, customizing the look of your video can give your work a sense of professionalism and creativity. Here, we will go over the basics of Adobe Premiere's color editing elements.

1. Click **Window** on the upper left corner and select **Lumetri Color** from the options below. This will add the corresponding window to your rightmost panel.
2. Select **Lumetri Color** from that panel. Under that you will see several options including **Basic Correction**, **Creative**, **Color Wheels & Match** and more.
3. For now, select **Basic Correction**. Once selected, you will see your basic options below.

## White Balance

One of the most important aspects of color correction is making sure your white balance is where it should be. Often you will see in clips with poor white balance that there is either an orange or blue tint that distracts the viewer. Clips that have good white balance contain objects that should look white. Objects like paper, snow, and even overexposed light should be as neutrally white as possible to achieve the most natural looking aesthetic.

To correct your white balance easily do the following.

1. Look in your timeline and mouse over your clip. Find a frame in your clip that has a white object or a part that should look white. This will be important later.
2. Look back to your Lumetri Color panel to the right and find the option that reads **White Balance**. Below that, you will see **WB Selector** with an eyedrop icon to the right of it.
3. Click on that eyedrop icon and then locate your clip in the panel directly to the left.
4. Click on a white object in your clip, and you should immediately see a change in the color.

The blue and orange **Temperature** bar below **WB selector** should have shifted, as well as the green and pink **Tint** meter. Feel free to adjust these to your liking; many creators deliberately stylize their videos by shifting their colors around to better convey a desired mood for their project.

Below those options are more settings to shift around. These include your **Exposure**, **Contrast**, and **Saturation** meters. Play with these settings until you get comfortable with how they affect the look of your video.

## Color Wheels

Do the following to further customize your colors.

1. Look down the **Lumetri Color** window and select **Color Wheels & Match**. Here, you will see three color wheels, titled **Shadows**, **Midtones**, and **Highlights**. These will allow you to adjust the colors of specific elements in your clip without affecting others.
2. To make your shadows greener, for example, hover your mouse over the center of the corresponding wheel and drag the **+** icon toward the green part.
3. To adjust the intensity of said color, drag the bar to the left of those wheels up or down.

These colors, on your computer screen, may look vastly different when played on another device. This is where learning how to read various color meters comes in handy. In this guide, we will briefly discuss the RBG Color Waveform that Adobe Premiere offers. When you use color meters and charts in your editing process, you can make sure your colors are broadcast friendly and not too overpowering.

1. To pull up this chart, select **Window** on the top left corner of your screen.
2. From the options below, click on **Lumetri Scopes**. This will reveal a waveform of blue, green, red, and white on the panel to your left.

Your goal is to keep the colors from spilling out beyond the graph; for example, overexposed whites in your video will be shown on the graph as the whites skyrocketing up above, whereas underexposed blacks will show the whites and colors dipping down.

## Consistency

Color consistency is key when creating your movie.

1. To make your clips color consistent to each other, make sure your meters are relatively the same for each of your clips.
2. If you wish to copy/paste your color attributes to other clips, simply right click on your edited clip from the timeline and select **Copy**.
3. Now right click on an unedited clip and select **Paste Attributes**. This will pull up a window that allows you to pick and choose which specific attributes to paste.
4. Click on the **Lumetri Color** option and click **OK**.

# Sound

## Introduction

Having good sound design in your videos can turn a decent project into a masterpiece. Nothing distracts an audience more than a distorted line or overpowering music. In this section, we will discuss how to level out your audio, and ways to make your dialogue and music as desirably audible as possible.

## Reading your audio levels

Look to the right of your timeline, there should be a tall bar with the numbers 0 through -57 followed by dB (decibel) at the bottom. This is your Audio Meter. Now, play your clip and notice how the meter rockets up colors from green to yellow to red at its loudest. This audio meter is your best friend when it comes to knowing how loud your sounds are in comparison to each other.

## Leveling out

Leveling out your audio is key to making your movie sound right.

**Recommended:** The white waveforms on your audio bars are a visual indication of how high and low your volume is.

1. To adjust the audio level for a whole clip, hover your mouse over the central white line over your audio clip.
2. Click and drag up or down to adjust the volume.
3. Play around with this and see what decibel level you think is appropriate. Always keep your audio below 0 dB, as going above will make your audio sound distorted.

**Recommended:** If you ask five creators what they recommend your dB levels are, you will receive five different answers. I typically stick with anywhere from -8 to -12 dB for dialogue, -20 for music, and -30 dB for ambience. Knowing when to raise the volume of one clip and which sounds to keep in the background comes with time. Experiment with your levels until the overall volume is to your satisfaction.

If you need to raise or lower your levels within the same clip, keyframes are your best friend.

1. To lower a specific part of your audio, you will first need to select your **Pen** tool from the list of icons to the left of your timeline.
2. Hover over your audio bar. Your icon will look like a black pen when over the timeline. Click on where you feel your audio is too high. You have now created a keyframe.
3. Now create another keyframe right before that one, and then create two more at the end of your audio segment. This will allow you to create a bridge.
4. Lower the two inner keyframes down to your desired dB level.

## Audio effects

Editing volume is just one important aspect of sound design. We will now touch on the various audio effects that you can put on your clips.

1. First, navigate to the top left of your screen to **Window** and then select **Effects**. You should see on the bottom left panel a series of folders, one of which reads **Audio Effects**.
2. Click on that to reveal a list of various audio effects.

Here, you can edit your sound using more advanced settings. Among these options are a denoiser, which eliminates unpleasant background noise from your clips, pitch shifter, a reverb editor, vocal enhancer, to name a few. The ones I most commonly use are the denoiser and vocal enhancer, with others being used in specific circumstances.

If you wish to use a soundtrack in your project, do the following.

1. Navigate down to your bottom left panel and create a bin titled **Music**.
2. Right click and select **Import** and then select your desired soundtrack from your files.
3. Make sure your track is on the hard drive you're working off as well, this will ensure easier transfers and fewer risks of bugs and crashes.
4. Once the track is in your bin, drag and drop the audio clip into your timeline. Ideally, your music will be placed below the rest of your audio clips (in this case, A2). It will appear as a green bar, distinct from the blue ones that were attached to your video clips.

# Exporting

Process

Congratulations! You have edited your video to satisfaction and are ready to export and share your work with the world. Before you export, make sure your whole sequence is rendered.

1. Look up to the upper left corner and select **Sequence**.
2. On the drop-down menu, click **Render In to Out**. This will render your whole sequence and allow for easier playback and quicker export times.
3. To export, click **File** on the upper left corner and hover down the drop-down menu to **Export**. Another menu will appear with the option **Media** at the top.
4. Clicking **Media** will bring you to another window.
5. At the top right of this window, you will see **Export Settings** with **Format** down below.

**Recommended:** Almost always, you will select **H.264** when choosing your format.

## Settings to use

Now that we have the correct format selected, we can now choose from a list of preset export settings.

* Click **Preset** below to reveal a large drop-down bar full of options. These include presets such as **YouTube 1080p Full HD**, **Twitter 1080p Full HD**, **High Quality 1080p HD** and **Match Source - High Bitrate**. What preset you set this to will largely depend on the platform you plan to distribute your work on.

## Conclusion

Now that you've exported your work, you're ready to upload it to your platform of choice and grow your viewership. I hope this guide serves as a jumping off point for creators who may be intimidated by the daunting task of video editing. Adobe Premiere has, for me, made my editing life much easier and I hope it does for you too.

Index

Adobe Premiere 1, 3, 4, 7, 8, 11

audio 2, 4, 5, 9, 10

color 6, 7, 8

decibel 9

edit 6, 10

export 10

interface 3, 4

keyframe 9

project 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10

**Recommended** 4, 6, 9, 10

render 7, 10

selection 5

sound 8, 9, 10

timeline 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10

Title 6

video 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11