

# Motion Graphics Introduction: 5 Useful Effects

Get to know these basic effects

## Nol's Favorite Basic Effects

AE has a ton of different effects that can be applied to your layers. Most of these are very specific, some of them are totally useless, and a few of them are absolutely essential to life. It's your job to figure out which ones fit into your motion design toolkit. Here's five that I think are really important:

### 1. Levels

I use this on every job, even though it's not very sexy. Levels has the power to adjust the brightness, contrast and tonal range of a layer by specifying the location of complete black, complete white, and mid tones for an image.



I love having control over the black and white levels individually, because so much of design is about attention to small details like contrast. Also, because I'm a control freak.

### 2. Gaussian Blur

There's just something special about blurs. There are a million uses for them, and After Effects gives you a lot of choices of which to use. Gaussian Blur is my favorite. It gives you a nice, soft organic blur for graphics -- but can also be heavy on your computer's processors, so beware of using it too much.



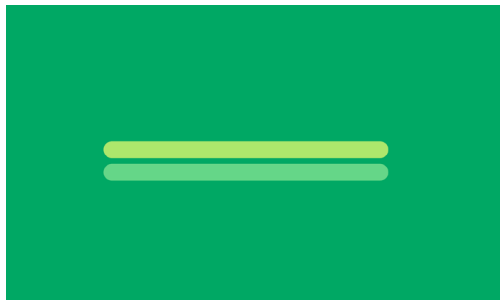
When combined with type and subtle motion, I find that blurs can bring a special, emotional quality to motion graphics. If you need type to feel sad, try blurring it a little. I know, I'm strange. But I'm also right.

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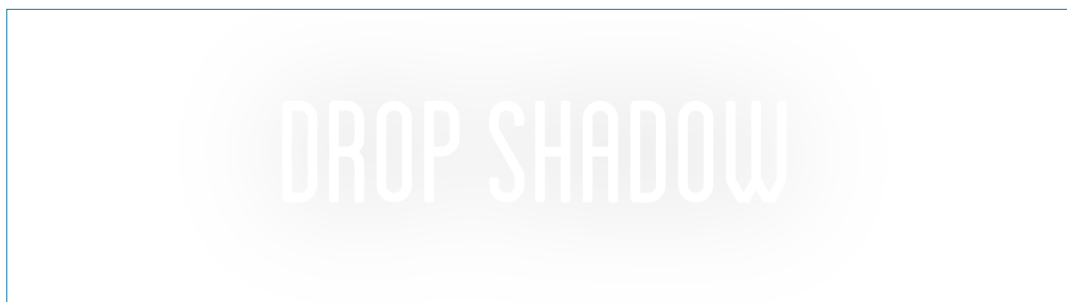
## 3. CC Bend It

Most of the Distort effects that come with AE are either really cheesy, or really specific, or both. I find CC Bend It to be pretty useful for bending vector graphics to my will. Just remember that the “Start” property indicates where you want the bend to start, not where you want the artwork to start.



## 4. Drop Shadow

One of the least sexy effects of all time, right? Well, normally I'd agree with you, but Drop Shadow has saved my butt time and time again when it comes to putting white type on moving footage. Trust me on this one.



## 5. Fractal Noise

The most complicated of these five effects, Fractal Noise is essential for adding organic texturing to your comps. I show how to use it to make old movie projector grit, but this amazing effect can be used for a lot of different things.

