

Motion Graphics Introduction: Glossary

Talk like a motion designer

LEARNING TO SPEAK AFTER EFFECTS

I use a lot of terms when I talk about After Effects that might not make sense to you yet. Hope this helps!

Composition, or “Comp”

A composition is a container that stores layers of artwork, video, audio, text, etc. in a timeline. This is where you create your animation, and where you spend most of your time while hanging out in After Effects.

Solid

A layer of solid color that can be animated like any other type of layer.

Layer

All artwork files, photos, video, solids, etc, are called layers once they have been added to a composition.

Frame

One unit of film time. Generally video is run at 29.97 frames per second, and film at 24 frames per second.

Frame Rate

The frequency at which every consecutive image appears per second. Generally referred to as Frames Per Second.

Keyframe

A keyframe is a marker that defines the value of a specific property for a layer at an exact frame in time. In order to create any basic animation for any property, you need two keyframes with different values on two different

Property

Changeable and/or animatable elements of a layer. For instance, the basic properties that you can change for any layer are Anchor Point, Position, Scale, Rotation and Opacity. Effects can also be properties of a layer.frames in the

Interpolation

What After Effects does between the keyframes. Interpolation is the process of letting the computer fill in the unknown data between two known values, such as keyframes.timeline.

Value

The adjustable numbers for any property. For instance, Scale values are listed as a percentage of their original size: 0% - 100%. Position values are listed as X and Y coordinates. Rotation values are listed as whole rotations and degree rotations.

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Rendering

Rendering is the process of turning your animated composition into a movie file that can be viewed outside of After Effects.

RAM Preview

The way you preview your comps. After Effects loads each frame into the RAM of your computer so it can play the sequence in real-time.

Work Area

Defines the part of the composition that is previewed when you do a RAM preview, or when you render.

Compression

The process of re-encoding data into a form that uses fewer bits of information than the original data.

Plugins and Scripts

Third-party software created to add a new (or better) feature to After Effects.

Expression

A snippet of code written on a layer property in After Effects that is often used to automate tedious or complicated animations and actions. Expressions are a very deep topic and can be used for things that are very simple or complex.

Precomp, or Precomposition

Essentially a comp-within-a-comp, precomps can be made by collapsing selected layers within a comp to “flatten” them into one layer, or by adding a pre-made composition into a different one. Either way, precomps give the animator a parallel timeline for creating animation.