5. Animating a Multimedia Presentation

Lesson overview

In this lesson, you'll learn how to do the following:

- Create a complex animation with multiple layers.
- Adjust the duration of a layer.
- Animate with Position, Scale, and Rotation keyframes.
- Use parenting to sync the animation of layers.
- Use Bezier curves to smooth a motion path.
- Animate a precomposed layer.
- Apply effects to a solid layer.
- Fade out audio.

This lesson will take about an hour to complete. Download the Lesson05 project files from the Lesson & Update Files tab on your Account page at www.peachpit.com, if you haven't already done so. As you work on this lesson, you'll preserve the start files. If you need to restore the start files, download them from your Account page.

PROJECT: ANIMATED VIDEO
Animation by Lee Daniels, www.leedanielsart.com

Adobe After Effects projects typically use a variety of imported footage, arranged in a composition, which is edited and animated using the Timeline panel. In this lesson, you'll become more familiar with animation fundamentals as you build a multi-media presentation.

Getting started

In this project, you will animate a hot air balloon floating through the sky. All seems peaceful until a gust of wind blows the balloon's colorful canvas off to cover the clouds.

1. Make sure the following files are in the Lessons/Lesson05 folder on your hard disk, or download them from your Account page at www.peachpit.com now:

   • In the Assets folder: Balloon.ai, Fire.mov, Sky.ai, Soundtrack.wav

   • In the Sample_Movie folder: Lesson05.mov

2. Open and play the Lesson05.mov sample movie to see what you will create in this lesson. When you're done, quit QuickTime Player. You may delete the sample movie from your hard disk if you have limited storage space.

As you start After Effects, restore the default application settings. See "Restoring default preferences" on page 2.

3. Start After Effects, and then immediately hold down Ctrl+Alt+Shift (Windows) or Command+Option+Shift (Mac OS) to restore default preferences settings. When prompted, click OK to delete your preferences.

4. Close the Start window.

5. Choose File > Save As > Save As.

6. In the Save As dialog box, navigate to the Lessons/Lesson05/Finished_Project folder. Name the project **Lesson05_Finished.aep**, and then click Save.

Importing the footage

Next, you'll import the footage you need for the project, including the balloon.ai composition.

1. Double-click an empty area of the Project panel to open the Import File dialog box.

2. Navigate to the Lessons/Lesson05/Assets folder on your hard disk, and select the Sky.ai file.
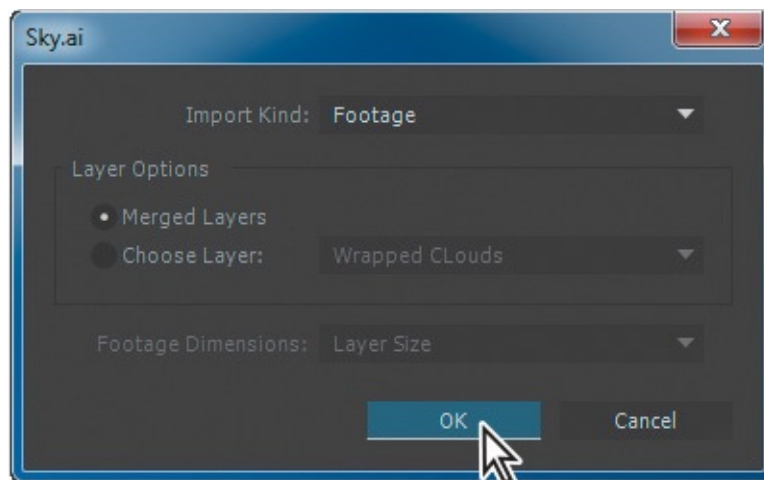
3. Choose Footage from the Import As menu, and then click Import or Open.

4. In the Sky.ai dialog box, make sure Merged Layers is selected, and then click OK.

5. Double-click an empty area of the Project panel, navigate to the Lessons/Lesson05/Assets folder, and select the Balloon.ai file.

6. Choose Composition - Retain Layer Sizes from the Import As menu, and click Import or Open.
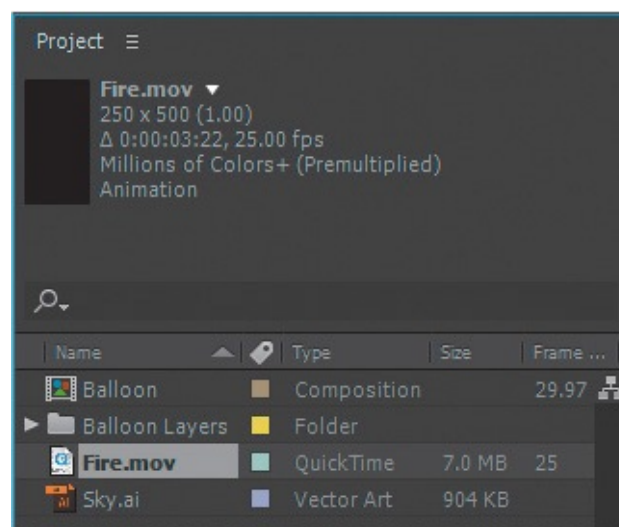
7. Press Ctrl+I (Windows) or Command+I (Mac OS) to open the Import File dialog box again.

8. Navigate to the Lessons/Lesson05/Assets folder, and select the Fire.mov file.

9. Make sure Footage is chosen in the Import As menu, and click Import or Open.

Creating the composition

You'll create the composition and add the sky.

1. Choose Composition > New Composition.

2. In the Composition Settings dialog box, do the following:

   • Name the composition **Balloon Scene**.

   • Choose HDTV 1080 25 from the Preset menu.

   • Make sure Square Pixels is chosen from the Pixel Aspect Ratio menu.

   • Choose Quarter for the Resolution.

   • Set Duration to **20** seconds.

• Click OK.
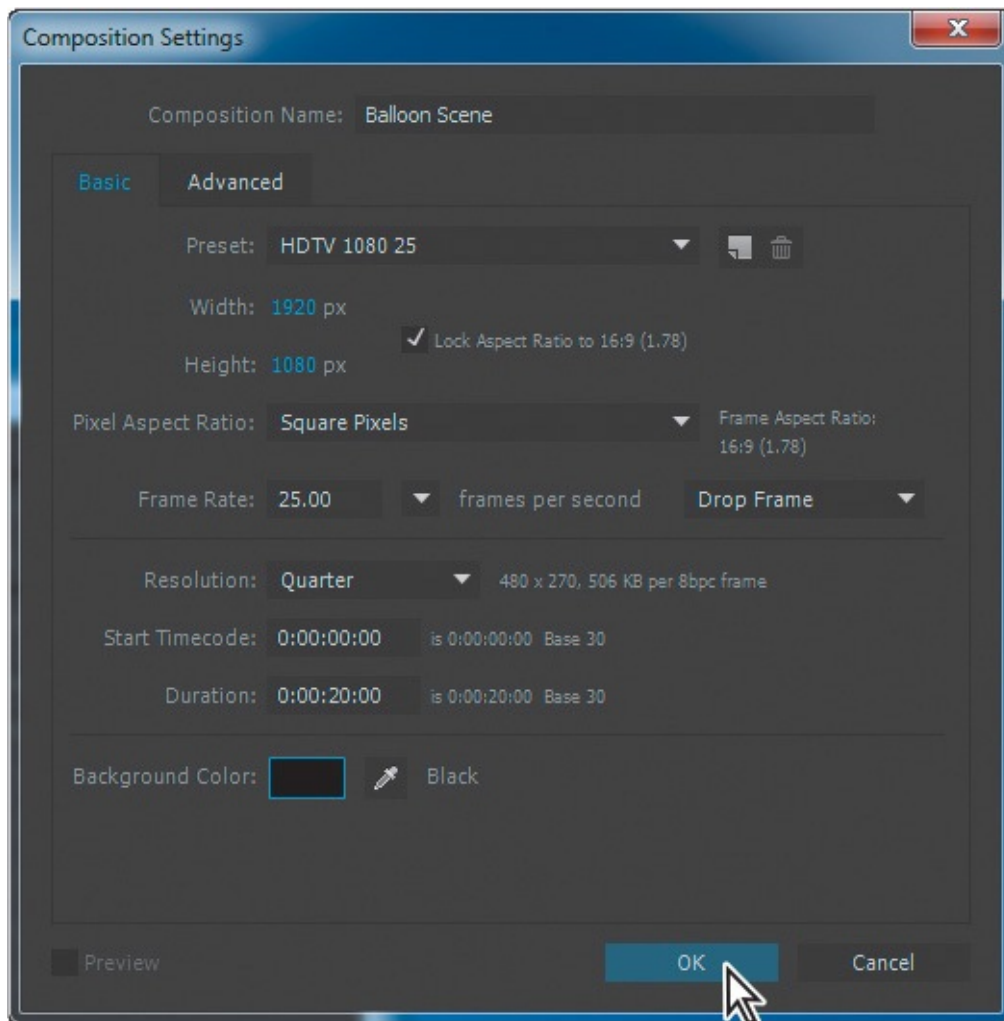
3. Drag the Sky.ai footage item from the Project panel into the Timeline panel.

The balloon will float across the Sky.ai image. The far right of the image contains the canvas-wrapped clouds that appear at the end of the scene. The wrapped clouds shouldn't be visible earlier in the movie.

4. In the Composition window, drag the Sky layer so that its lower left corner is even with the lower left corner of the composition.
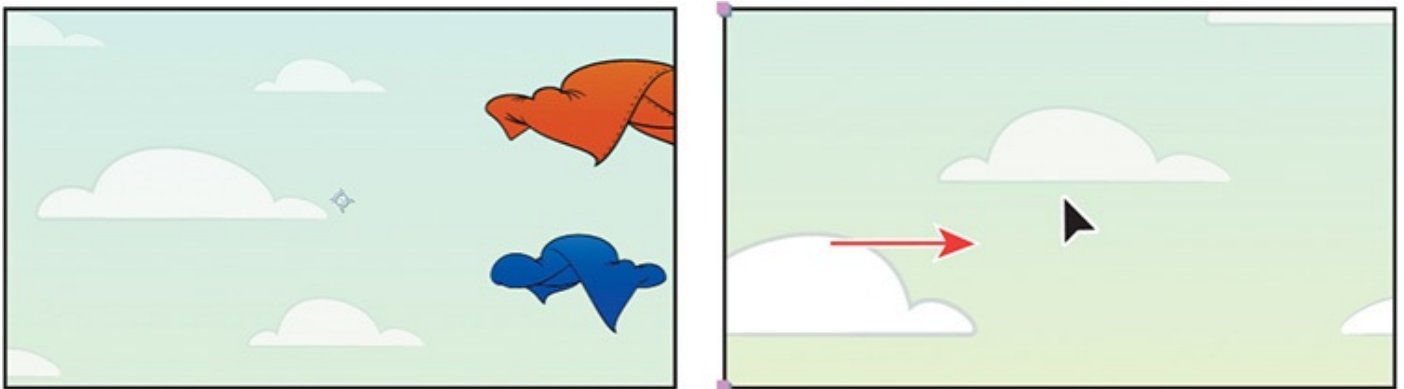

Adjusting anchor points

The anchor point is the point about which transformations, such as scaling or rotation, are performed. By default, a layer's anchor point is at the center of the layer.

You'll change the anchor points for the character's arm and head so that you can better control the character's movements as he tugs on the cord to ignite the fire, and as he looks up and down.

1. Double-click the Balloon composition in the Project panel to open it in the Composition panel and the Timeline panel.
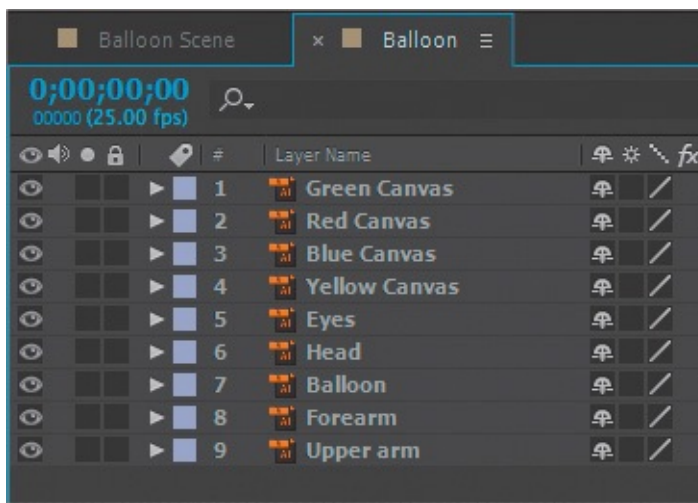
The Balloon composition includes layers for the canvas colors, the balloon itself, and the character's eyes, head, forearm, and upper arm.

2. Choose 50% from the Magnification Ratio pop-up menu at the bottom of the Composition panel so you can see the balloon's detail more clearly.

3. Select the Hand tool (🖑) in the Tools panel, and then pan so that the character is centered in the Composition panel.

4. Select the Selection tool (▶) in the Tools panel.

5. Select the Upper arm layer in the Timeline panel.

6. Select the Pan Behind tool (⌖) in the Tools panel (or press Y to activate it).

With the Pan Behind tool, you can move the anchor point without moving the entire layer in the Composition window.

7. Move the anchor point to the character's shoulder.

8. Select the Forearm layer in the Timeline panel, and then move its anchor point to the elbow.

9. Select the Head layer in the Timeline panel, and move its anchor point to the character's neck.

10. Select the Selection tool in the Tools panel.

11. Choose File > Save to save your work so far.

Parenting layers

This composition includes several layers that need to move together. For example, as the balloon floats, the character's arm and head should move along with it. As you've seen in previous lessons, a parenting relationship synchronizes changes in the parent layer with corresponding changes in the child layer. You'll establish parenting relationships among the layers in this composition, and you'll add the fire video as well.

1. In the Timeline panel, press Ctrl (Windows) or Command (Mac OS) as you select the Head and Upper arm layers.

2. In the Parent column for either of the selected layers, choose 7. Balloon from the pop-up menu.
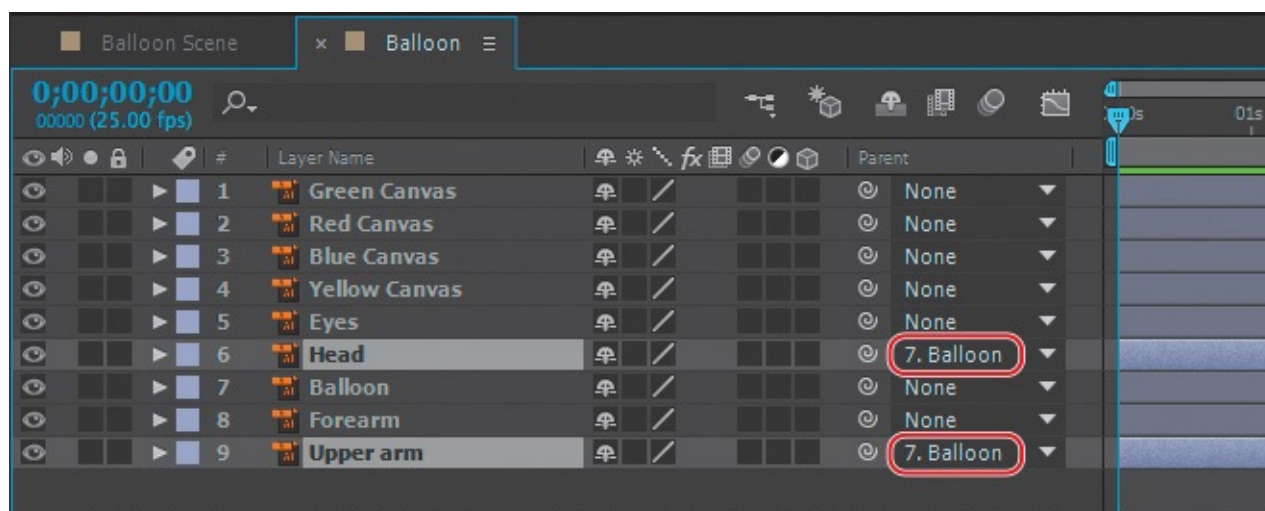
This establishes both the Head and Upper arm layers as child layers of the Balloon layer. When the Balloon layer moves, the other two layers will move with it.

The eyes not only need to move with the balloon, they need to move with the head, so you'll create that parenting relationship next.

3. In the Parent column for the Eyes layer, choose 6. Head from the pop-up menu.

The forearm should move with the upper arm as well.

4. In the Parent column for the Forearm layer, choose 9. Upper arm from the pop-up menu.

Now you need to ensure that the fire video travels with the balloon.

5. Drag the Fire.mov file from the Project panel to the Timeline panel, positioning it directly below the canvas layers so that the fire will appear to go inside the balloon, rather than outside it. (The Fire layer should be between the Yellow Canvas layer and the Eyes layer.)

The fire video is positioned in the center of the composition, so you'll need to zoom out a bit to see it.

6. Choose 25% from the Magnification Ratio pop-up menu so that you can see the outline of the selected video.

7. In the Composition window, drag the fire video over the burner. To see the flame in action so you can position it correctly, drag the current-time marker across the first second of the time ruler.

8. When you're satisfied with the Fire layer's position, choose 8. Balloon from the pop-up menu in the Fire layer's Parent column.
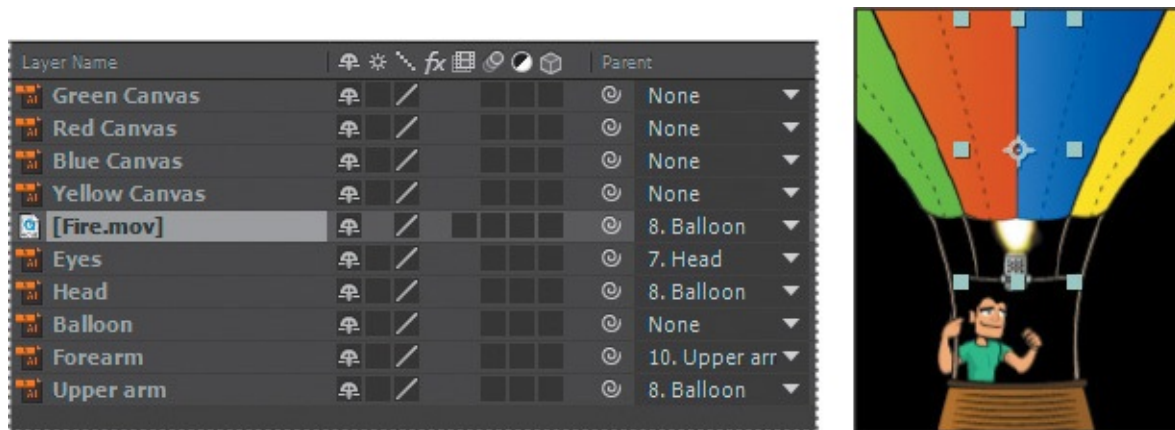

9. Choose File > Save to save your work so far.

Precomposing layers

Sometimes it's easier to work with a set of layers in a composition. Precomposing layers moves them to a new composition, nested inside the original composition. You'll precompose the canvas layers so that you can work with them separately when you animate them sailing off the balloon.

1. In the Balloon Timeline panel, Shift-click the Green Canvas and Yellow Canvas layers to select all four canvas layers.

2. Choose Layer > Pre-compose.

3. In the Pre-compose dialog box, name the composition **Canvas**, select Move All Attributes Into The New Composition, and click OK.
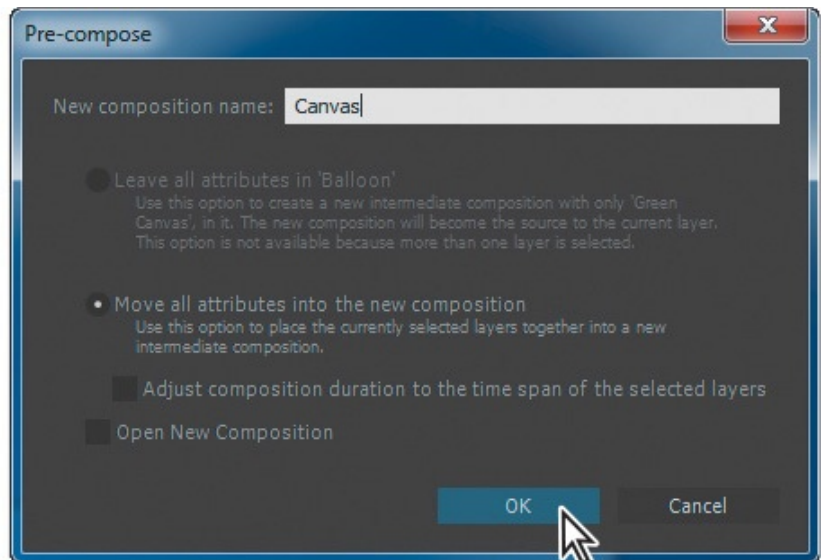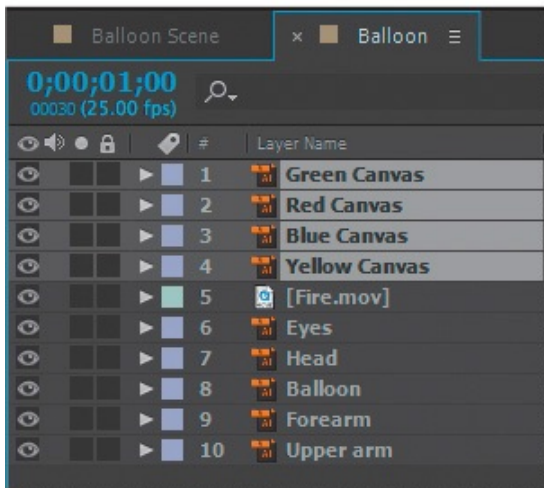
The four layers you selected in the Timeline panel are replaced by a single Canvas composition layer.

   4. Double-click the Canvas layer in the Timeline panel to edit the composition.

   5. Choose Composition > Composition Settings.

   6. In the Composition Settings dialog box, deselect Lock Aspect Ratio, change the Width value to **5000** px, and click OK.
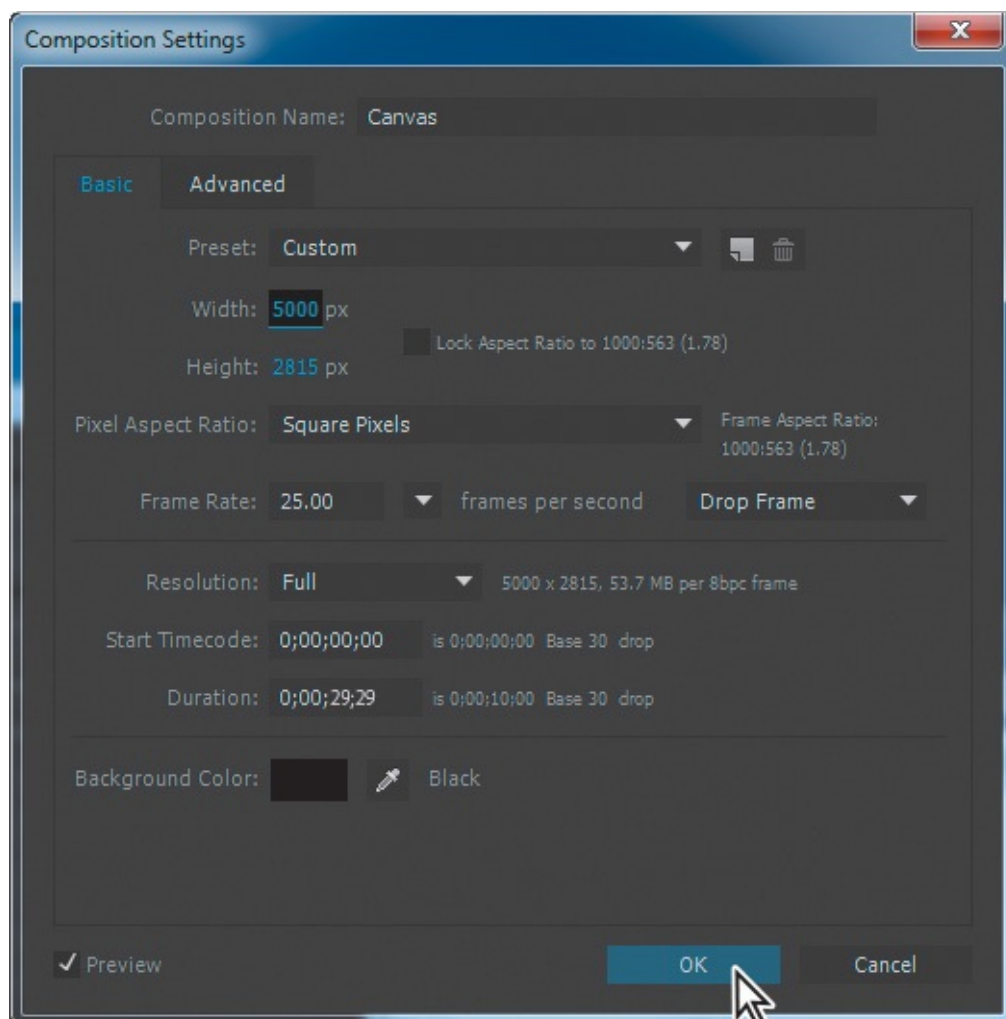
   7. Shift-select all four layers in the Timeline panel, and then drag them to the far left side of the Composition panel. You may need to change the magnification.