Getting Started

Adobe After Effects CC provides a comprehensive set of 2D and 3D tools for compositing, animation, and effects that motion-graphics professionals, visual effects artists, web designers, and film and video professionals need. After Effects is widely used for digital post-production of film, video, DVD, and the web. You can composite layers in various ways, apply and combine sophisticated visual and audio effects, and animate both objects and effects.

About Classroom in a Book

Adobe After Effects CC Classroom in a Book (2015 release) is part of the official training series for Adobe graphics and publishing software, developed with the support of Adobe product experts. The lessons are designed to let you learn at your own pace. If you're new to Adobe After Effects, you'll learn the fundamental concepts and features you'll need to master the program. And if you've been using Adobe After Effects for a while, you'll find that Classroom in a Book teaches many advanced features, including tips and techniques for using the 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 match your interests and needs. Each lesson concludes with a review section summarizing what you've covered.

Prerequisites

Before beginning to use *Adobe After Effects CC Classroom in a Book (2015 release),* make sure that your system is set up correctly and that you've installed the required software and hardware. You should have a working knowledge of your computer and operating system. You should know how to use the mouse and standard menus and commands, and also how to open, save, and close files. If you need to review these techniques, see the printed or online documentation included with your Microsoft® Windows® or Apple® Mac® OS software.

To complete the lessons in this book, you'll need to have both Adobe After Effects CC (2015 release) and Adobe Bridge CC installed. The exercises in this book are based on After Effects CC (2015.1 release).

Installing After Effects and Bridge

You must purchase the Adobe After Effects CC software separately. For system requirements and complete instructions on installing the software, visit www.adobe.com/support. Note that After Effects CC requires a 64-bit operating system and OpenGL 3.3 support. You must also have Apple QuickTime 7.6.6 or later installed on your system.

Some of the lessons in this book use Adobe Bridge. After Effects and Bridge use separate installers. You must install these applications from Adobe Creative Cloud

(creative.adobe.com) onto your hard disk. Follow the onscreen instructions.

Optimizing performance

Creating movies is memory-intensive work for a desktop computer. After Effects CC (2015 release) requires a minimum of 4GB of RAM. The more RAM that is available to After Effects, the faster the application will work for you. For information about optimizing memory, cache, and other settings for After Effects, see "Improve performance" in After Effects Help.

Restoring default preferences

The preferences files control the way the After Effects user interface appears on your screen. The instructions in this book assume that you see the default interface when they describe the appearance of tools, options, windows, panels, and so forth. Therefore, it's a good idea to restore the default preferences, especially if you are new to After Effects.

Each time you quit After Effects, the panel positions and certain command settings are recorded in the preferences files. To restore the original default settings, press Ctrl+Alt+Shift (Windows) or Command+Option+Shift (Mac OS) while starting After Effects. (After Effects creates new preferences files if they don't already exist the next time you start the program.)

Restoring the default preferences can be especially helpful if someone has already customized After Effects on your computer. If your copy of After Effects hasn't been used yet, these files won't exist, so this procedure is unnecessary.

Important: If you want to save the current settings, you can rename a preferences file instead of deleting it. When you are ready to restore those settings, change the name back, and make sure that the file is located in the correct preferences folder.

1. Locate the After Effects preferences folder on your computer:

- **For Windows:** …/Users/<*user name*>/AppData/Roaming/Adobe/AfterEffects/13.6

- **For Mac OS:** …/Users/<*user name*>/Library/Preferences/Adobe/After Effects/13.6

● **Note**

In Mac OS 10.7 and later, the user library folder is hidden by default. To see it, in the Finder, choose Go > Go To Folder. In the Go To Folder dialog box, type **~/Library**, and then click Go.

2. Rename any preferences files you want to preserve, and then restart After Effects.

Accessing the Classroom in a Book files

The lessons in *Adobe After Effects CC Classroom in a Book (2015 release)* use specific source files, such as image files created in Adobe Photoshop® and Adobe Illustrator®, audio files, and prepared QuickTime movies. In order to work through the projects in this book, you will need to download the lesson files from your Account page at peachpit.com. You can download the files for individual lessons or download them all in a single file.

If you purchased an eBook from peachpit.com or adobepress.com, the files will automatically appear on your Account page, under the Lesson & Update Files tab.

If you purchased an eBook from a different vendor or a print book, use the unique code in the back of this book to gain access to the lesson files.

To access the *Classroom in a Book* files, follow these steps:

1. On a Mac or PC, go to www.peachpit.com/redeem, and enter the code found at the back of your book. **This code is not the same as the book's ISBN.**

2. Click Redeem Code, and sign in or create an account. You will be taken to your Account page.

   You only need to enter the code once. After you redeem the code, you'll be able to access your lesson files at peachpit.com any time you want without entering the code again.

◆ **Warning**

   Once the code has been used, it cannot be used again.

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3. Click the Lesson & Update Files tab of your Account page to see a list of downloadable files.

4. Click the lesson file links to download them to your computer.

   The files are compressed into ZIP archives to speed download time and protect the contents from damage during transfer. You must uncompress (or "unzip") the files to restore them to their original size and format before you use them with the book. Modern Mac and Windows systems are set up to open ZIP archives by simply double-clicking.

5. On your hard drive, create a new folder in a convenient location and give it the name "Lessons," following the standard procedure for your operating system:

   • In Windows, right-click, and choose New > Folder. Then enter the new name for your folder.

   • In Mac OS, in the Finder, choose File > New Folder. Type the new name, and drag the folder to the location you want to use.

6. Drag the unzipped Lessons folder (which contains folders named Lesson01, Lesson02, and so on) that you downloaded onto your hard drive to your new Lessons folder. When you begin each lesson, navigate to the folder with that lesson number to access all the assets you need to complete the lesson.

About copying the sample movies and projects

You will create and render one or more QuickTime movies in some lessons in this book. The files in the Sample_Movie folders are examples that you can use to see the end results of each lesson and to compare them with your own results.

The files in the End_Project_File folders are samples of the completed project for each lesson. Use these files for reference if you want to compare your work in progress with the project files used to generate the sample movies. These end-project files vary in size from relatively small to a couple of megabytes, so you can either download them all now if you have ample storage space, or download just the end-project file for each lesson as needed, and then delete it when you finish that lesson.

Web Edition

This book comes with a free Web Edition that provides many benefits and can be accessed from any device with a connection to the Internet.

Your Web Edition contains the complete text of the book, plus hours of instructional video keyed to the text as well as interactive quizzes. In addition, the Web Edition will be updated when Adobe adds significant feature updates between major Creative Cloud releases.

Accessing the free Web Edition

You must register your book purchase on peachpit.com in order to access the free Web Edition:

1. Go to www.peachpit.com/register, and then sign in or create a new account.

2. Enter the book's ISBN: 9780134308128.

3. Answer the questions as proof of purchase. The Web Edition will appear under the Digital Purchases tab on your Account page.

4. Click the Launch link to access the product.

How to use these lessons

Each lesson in this book provides step-by-step instructions for creating one or more specific elements of a real-world project. The lessons build on each other in terms of concepts and skills, so the best way to learn from this book is to proceed through the lessons in sequential order. In this book, some techniques and processes are explained and described in detail only the first few times you perform them.

Many aspects of the After Effects application can be controlled by multiple techniques, such as a menu command, a button, dragging, and a keyboard shortcut. Only one or two of the methods are described in any given procedure, so that you can learn different ways of working even when the task is one you've done before.

The organization of the lessons is also design-oriented rather than feature-oriented. That means, for example, that you'll work with layers and effects on real-world design projects over several lessons, rather than in just one lesson.

Additional resources

Adobe After Effects CC Classroom in a Book (2015 release) is not meant to replace documentation that comes with the program or to be a comprehensive reference for every feature. Only the commands and options used in the lessons are explained in this book. For comprehensive information about program features and tutorials, refer to these resources:

- **Adobe After Effects Learn & Support:** helpx.adobe.com/after-effects.html is where you can find and browse tutorials, help, and support on Adobe.com.

- **After Effects Forums:** forums.adobe.com/community/aftereffects_general_discussion lets you tap into peer-to-peer discussions, and questions and answers about After Effects.

- **Adobe *Create* Magazine:** create.adobe.com offers thoughtful articles on design and design issues, a gallery showcasing the work of top-notch designers, tutorials, and more.

- **Resources for educators:** www.adobe.com/education and edex.adobe.com offer a treasure trove of information for instructors who teach classes on Adobe software. Find solutions for education at all levels, including free curricula that use an integrated approach to teaching Adobe software and can be used to prepare for the Adobe Certified Associate exams.

Also check out these useful links:

- **Adobe Add-ons:** creative.adobe.com/addons is a central resource for finding tools, services, extensions, code samples, and more to supplement and extend your Adobe products.

- **Adobe After Effects CC product home page:** www.adobe.com/products/aftereffects

Adobe Authorized Training Centers

Adobe Authorized Training Centers offer instructor-led courses and training on Adobe products. A directory of AATCs is available at training.adobe.com/trainingpartners.