

Motion Graphics with After Effects - Workbook

This workbook turns the After Effects course into real reps inside the software. Each section pairs with a course module and mixes guided animation exercises, fill-in worksheets, and checklists so you finish an actual rendered title sequence, not just notes. Work through it with After Effects open and a comp ready - the value is in the animations you build and the settings you record so you can repeat them on the next brief.

Getting Started: Compositions, Layers, and Your First Animation

Configure After Effects correctly and animate a single layer with clean keyframes before attempting anything ambitious.

Exercise: The Slide-Scale-Fade Drill

Create a 1920 by 1080 comp at 24 fps. Add one shape layer and animate it across the first second so it slides in from the left, scales up from 80 to 100 percent, and fades from 0 to 100 percent opacity. Then select all keyframes and press F9 to apply Easy Ease. Preview both versions and notice the difference.

- Which keyframe shortcut revealed all your animated properties at once - U or UU?
- How did Easy Ease change the feel of the motion compared to the default linear keyframes?
- Where did you set the anchor point, and how did that affect the scale animation?

Worksheet: My Composition Settings

Record the comp settings you will use for the course title-sequence project. Choose every value by the final delivery target, not by habit.

Project name and save location

Frame rate (24 / 25 / 30 / 60 fps) and why

Resolution (1920x1080 / 3840x2160) and destination

Composition duration (seconds)

Auto-save interval set in Preferences (minutes)

Project panel folders created (Comps / Footage / Audio / Solids)

Checklist: Interface and Setup Warm-Up Checklist

- [] Revealed all five transforms using A, P, S, R, and T shortcuts
- [] Set the work area with B and N to preview only one section
- [] Toggled fit and 100 percent zoom with the semicolon key
- [] Created Comps, Footage, Audio, and Solids folders in the Project panel
- [] Enabled Increment and Save for versioned files
- [] Lowered preview resolution to Half for responsive playback

Timing, Easing, and the Graph Editor

Drill deliberate spacing and custom easing - the single biggest jump from amateur to professional motion.

Exercise: The Weighted Bounce

Animate a circle dropping from the top of the comp to the floor. Add anticipation (a few frames lifting before the fall), squash on the impact frame (lower Y scale, widen X scale), and follow-through (a small overshoot before it settles). Compare against a plain linear drop.

- How many frames of anticipation felt right before the drop read as intentional rather than slow?

- What X and Y scale values gave a convincing squash without breaking the circle's volume?

- Which of the 12 principles did you find hardest to apply, and why?

Exercise: Graph Editor Curve Sculpting

Take a single position move between two points. Open the Graph Editor on the Speed graph, apply Easy Ease, then drag the Bezier handles to create three distinct feels: a soft floaty drift, a snappy fast travel, and an overshoot that settles back. Save your favorite as a reusable curve with the Flow or Ease and Wizz script if installed.

- What incoming and outgoing influence percentages produced your snappy version?

- Describe the speed-graph shape that made the motion feel floaty versus punchy.

- Which easing feel best suits the brand of your title sequence?

Worksheet: My Easing and Timing Reference

Build a personal cheat sheet of easing values and stagger amounts so your motion stays consistent across the whole project.

Default text reveal easing (influence in / out)

Logo build easing (influence in / out)

Stagger / offset between repeated elements (frames)

Shutter Angle for motion blur (degrees)

Standard fast-move duration (frames)

Standard readable hold for text (seconds)

Checklist: Professional Motion Checklist

- Applied slow-in and slow-out via easing to every meaningful move
- Added anticipation to at least one key action
- Staggered repeated elements by 2 to 3 frames instead of animating together
- Enabled the global Motion Blur master toggle on fast layers
- Shaped at least one move by hand in the Graph Editor
- Confirmed fast motion no longer strobos after enabling blur

Shape Layers and Text Animation

Build crisp resolution-independent graphics and kinetic text reveals that stay legible.

Exercise: The Trim Paths Icon Build

With no layer selected, draw a circle with the Ellipse tool to create a shape layer with stroke and no fill. Add Trim Paths and keyframe End from 0 to 100 over 20 frames. Add a Repeater set to 6 copies with a 60-degree rotation offset for a radial burst. Ease the keyframes, enable motion blur, and pre-compose the result as a reusable asset.

- Did your drawing create a shape layer or a mask, and how did you confirm it?

- How did the Repeater offset change the final icon - what copy count and rotation looked best?

- Why will this icon render cleanly if the client later requests 4K?

Exercise: Word-by-Word Kinetic Headline

On a text layer, click Animate and add a Position animator, pushing the text off-screen. Keyframe Range Selector 1 Offset from -100 to 100 percent, set Advanced Shape to Ramp Up, and change Based On to Words. Add a second Opacity animator so words fade as they rise. Hold the fully revealed text dead still, then exit with a Blur animator.

- How long did you hold the readable text, and could you comfortably read it twice?

- Did animating by Words read more clearly than by Characters for this headline?

- Which two properties did you animate, and did adding a third make it feel like noise?

Worksheet: My Title Sequence Storyboard

Plan the beats of your title sequence before animating. Map each element to a time range and a reveal style so the build is intentional.

Beat 1 element and time range (e.g. logo, 0.0 to 1.0s)

Beat 2 element and time range

Beat 3 element and time range

Reveal style per beat (trim path / text animator / scale-fade)

Color palette (hex values)

Total sequence length (seconds)

Checklist: Shape and Type Quality Checklist

- Confirmed graphics are shape layers, not imported flattened images
- Used Trim Paths for at least one draw-on reveal
- Animated text with animators and a range selector, not letter-by-letter keyframes
- Kept the readable hold of every text reveal completely still
- Parented grouped elements to a null for unified control
- Pre-composed complex groups into reusable assets

Expressions, Sound, and Rendering Your Title Sequence

Automate motion with expressions, sync hits to audio, and export a finished, delivery-ready title sequence.

Exercise: Three One-Line Expressions

Alt-click (Option-click) the stopwatch to add expressions to three layers. Add wobble(2, 30) to a background element for subtle life, loopOut() on a layer with two keyframes to loop it forever, and time*90 on a Rotation property to spin a shape at a steady 90 degrees per second. Confirm each with numpad Enter and preview.

- What did changing wobble's frequency and amount values do to the motion?

- Which existing keyframes did loopOut repeat, and did the loop feel seamless?

- How would you slow the time-driven spin without touching the expression's structure?

Exercise: Sync the Hits to the Beat

Import a music track and drop it on the timeline. Play the comp and tap the multiply key on the numpad in time with the beat to drop layer markers. Snap your logo reveal and headline entrance keyframes to those markers. Add a soft impact sound on the logo and a whoosh under the headline.

- Did snapping keyframes to beat markers make the sequence feel more designed?

- Where did you place the impact and whoosh, and did they hide any rough animation?

- If you used Convert Audio to Keyframes, what did you drive with the amplitude slider?

Worksheet: My Render and Delivery Spec

Lock your export settings for each destination before rendering so you never ship the wrong file.

Master codec (ProRes 422 / 4444 for alpha)

Web delivery format and bitrate (H.264 MP4, Mbps)

Alpha channel needed? (Y/N) and chosen codec if yes

Work area in and out points (timecode)

Frame rate confirmed to match comp? (Y/N)

Delivery platforms and required sizes

Checklist: Final Delivery Checklist

- [] Set work area to the exact in and out so no dead frames render
- [] Rendered a ProRes master from the Render Queue and watched it back fully
- [] Sent the master to Media Encoder for an H.264 1080p web export
- [] Added any platform-specific size presets required
- [] Verified the first frame, last frame, and audio sync
- [] Checked final file size against the platform limit before sending

Your Action Plan

1. Create your master project file with the four Project panel folders and a correctly configured comp for your delivery target
2. Drill the slide-scale-fade and weighted-bounce exercises until Easy Ease and anticipation feel automatic
3. Spend a full session in the Graph Editor sculpting a single move into three different feels and saving your favorite curve
4. Storyboard your title sequence with three beats, time ranges, a color palette, and a reveal style per beat
5. Build your logo or icon as a shape layer using Trim Paths and a Repeater, then pre-compose it as a reusable asset
6. Animate your headline with text animators and a range selector, holding the readable text dead still
7. Add the three core expressions - wiggle, loopOut, and time - to give the scene automatic life
8. Import music, mark the beats, and snap your two key reveals to the beat with an impact and a whoosh
9. Render a ProRes master from the Render Queue and watch it back in full
10. Export an H.264 1080p file from Media Encoder, verify sync and file size, and add the finished piece to your portfolio

