Adding Life to Static Images: A Tutorial

Getting started

Adobe® After Effects® gives you the power to produce professional-quality composites, smooth animations, and elaborate special effects. It's ideal for short, layer-intensive projects. You can import images directly from Adobe Illustrator® and Adobe Photoshop® with no loss in image detail or quality, and then use After Effects to add the element of motion to graphic designs.

This tutorial details some of the ways After Effects can enhance your artwork with motion and sound.

Note: The files you'll use in this tutorial work on both Windows® and Mac OS™.

After Effects 3.1 tutorial files

You will need the following files to complete this tutorial:

- 0-HiTone.aep
- 1-HiTone.psd
- 2-record.ai
- 3-record.psd
- 4-music.mov
- HiTone.mov

These files are located in the same folder as the Tutorial.pdf. You are using a tryout version of After Effects, which does not let you save or export your work. If you'd like to see a modified version of what you'll create in this tutorial, double-click HiTone.mov. When it opens in MoviePlayer, click the Play button to preview the movie.

Opening the project

1 Start Adobe After Effects Tryout.

2 Choose File > Open Project, select 0-HiTone.aep, and then click Open.

3 Choose File > Preferences > Display, and then, under the Motion Path section, select All Keyframes; then click OK.

4 Choose Composition > New Composition.

5 In the Composition Settings dialog box, type **HiTone intro** for the Composition Name. For the Frame Size Width, type **360** and for the Height, type **240**. Type **625** in the Duration text box to change the duration to 6 seconds and 25 frames, and then click OK.

6 Choose File > Import > Footage Files. Select 2-record.ai and click Open; then select 4-music.mov and click Open.

Now you'll import a Photoshop file containing layers. Once imported, the Photoshop layers become layers in a new After Effects composition. This composition will have the same dimensions as the original Photoshop file.

7 Select 3-record.psd and click Open. Select Merged Layers and click OK; then click Done.

Now you'll import a Photoshop file as a composition. Once imported, all the Photoshop layers become After Effects composition layers.

8 Choose File > Import > Photoshop as Comp (Windows) or Photoshop 3.0 as Comp (Mac OS), select 1-HiTone.psd, and then click Open.

Two items named 1-HiTone.psd now appear in the Project window, the Photoshop composition file and a folder containing the individual layers. You will use only the composition file in this tutorial.

Note: You can also import footage files by dragging them from Windows Explorer (Windows), Finder (Mac OS), or the desktop and dropping them into the After Effects Project window.

Understanding and creating keyframes

In addition to rotating and scaling images in After Effects, you can also set keyframes to change a layer's properties, such as position and scale, over time. Keyframes are markers that you set along the Time Layout window's timeline to designate changes to a property value. You'll learn how to set keyframes in this exercise.

1 Drag 3-record.psd from the Project window to the Comp 1 window. It should snap to the center of the window.
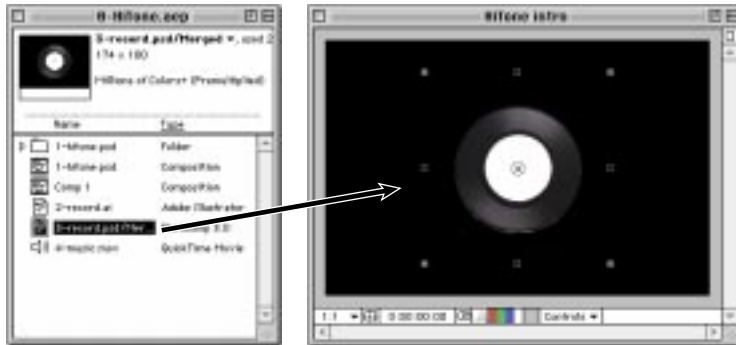
Note: To move a file from the Project window to the center of the Composition window, you can select the file in the Project window and press Control + / (Windows) or Command + / (Mac OS).

In this exercise you'll change the rotation and size of an image using property values in the Time Layout window. First let's change rotation and size using tools from the Tools palette.

2 Select the rotation tool (⟳) and click to select the 3-record.psd layer in the HiTone Intro Composition window; then drag one of the layer's corner handles to the right.

3 Choose Edit > Undo Rotate Object.

4 Select the pointer tool (▶) and then click one of the corner handles of the image in the HiTone Intro Composition window and drag it to stretch the image.

5 Choose Edit > Undo Scale Object.

Note: To quickly undo an edit, press Control + Z (Windows) or Command + Z (Mac OS).

6 Press the comma key (,) to zoom out of the Composition window, and then drag the image to the upper left corner of the window.
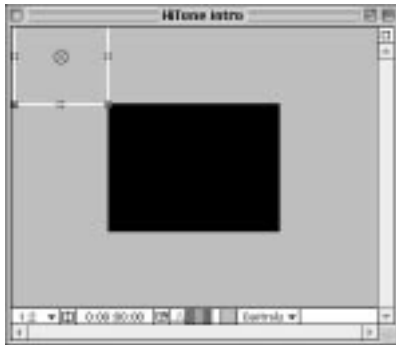

7 With the pointer tool still selected, select the 3-record.psd layer in the Time Layout window.

8 Click the triangle next to 3-record.psd to expand the layer properties outline; then click the triangle next to Geometrics to further expand the outline.
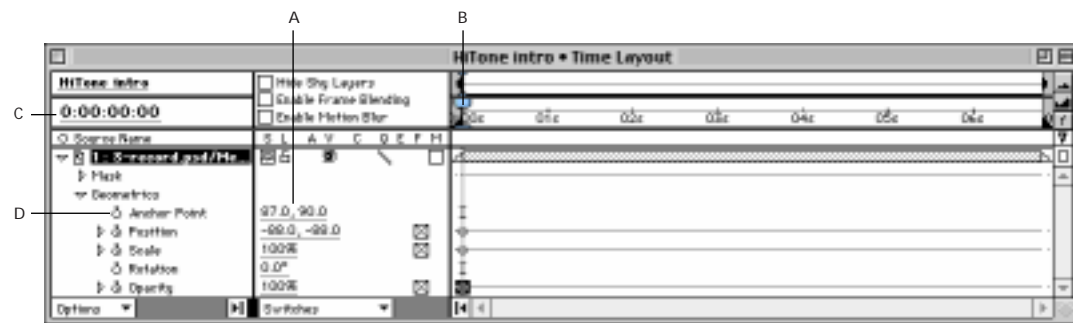
*A. Underlined property value **B.** Current-time marker **C.** Current-time indicator **D.** Stopwatch*

9 Click the stopwatch (⟳) next to Position, Scale, and Opacity to set the first keyframe for each property.
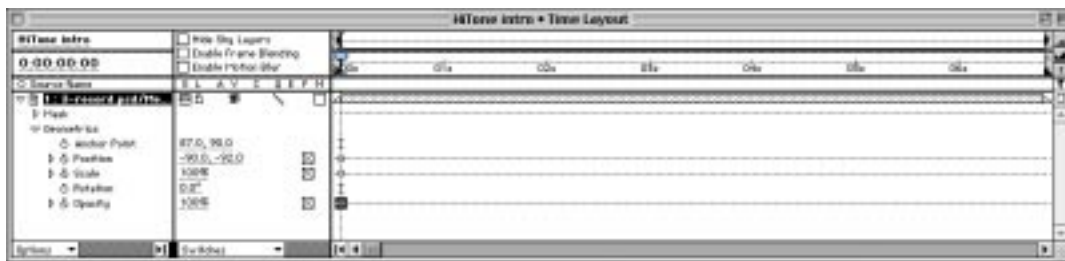
10 Click the underlined Scale value and type **200** for Width, and then click OK.

11 Click the underlined Opacity value and type **0**; then click OK.

12 Drag the current-time marker to 2 seconds.

13 Click the underlined Position value and type **233** for the x-axis, and then press Tab and type **185** for the y-axis. Click OK.

14 Click the underlined Scale value and type **15**, and then click OK.

15 Click the underlined Opacity value, type **100**, and then click OK.

16 Press the Home key to return the current-time marker to 0:00.

17 Press the spacebar to preview your edits, and then press it again to stop the preview.

Editing a motion path

Notice how a dotted motion path appears where the image has moved across the Composition window. Let's change this path.

1 Select the pen tool in the Tools palette (🖉).

2 Click anywhere on the motion path and drag to the left.

3 Drag the Bezier curve handles in different directions and notice how the curve changes.

4 Press Home to return the current-time marker to 0:00, and then press the spacebar to preview your changes.

5 Press Home to return the current-time marker to 0:00.

6 Click the arrow next to the 3-record.psd layer in the Time Layout window to collapse the outline.

## Working with Adobe Photoshop files

Adobe has made it easy for you to use your Photoshop files in After Effects. You can now import a native Photoshop file directly into After Effects and preserve all its layers, transfer modes, and transparency settings.

The 1-HiTone.psd file you imported as a composition contains five layers. When you imported it as a composition, After Effects converted the Photoshop layers to After Effects layers. When you open the 1-HiTone.psd composition all the original Photoshop layers appear as After Effects layers in the Time Layout window. After Effects also preserves the Photoshop transfer modes, which you can modify or remove within After Effects.

### Editing the Shadow layer of the 1-HiTone.psd composition

1 Double-click the 1-HiTone.psd composition file in the Project window.

Notice how a new Composition window and a new Time Layout window appear on the desktop.
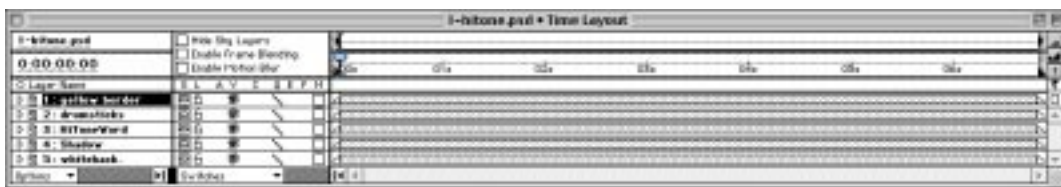
2 With the current-time marker at 0:00, select the Shadow layer and press **p** to open the Position property and press **Shift + t** to open the Opacity property.

3 Click the Position and Opacity stopwatches to set the first keyframes for each property.
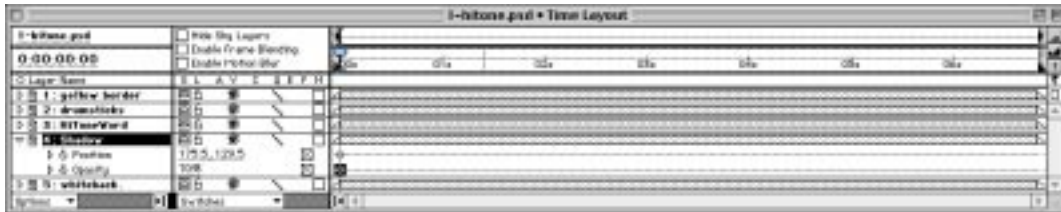
4 Click the underlined Position value and type **208** for the x-axis; then press Tab and type **131** for the y-axis, and then click OK.

5 Click the underlined Opacity value and type **0**, and then click OK.

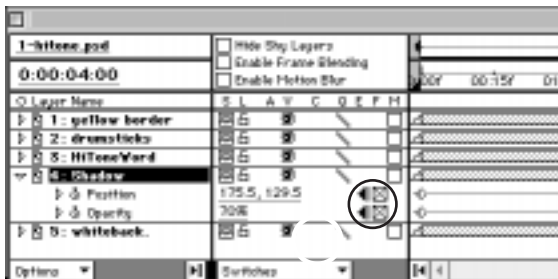6 Drag the current-time marker to 2:12, using the current-time indicator as a guide.
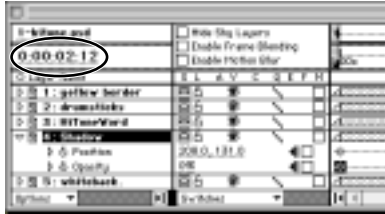
7 Click the underlined Position value and type **176** for the x-axis; then press Tab and type **130** for the y-axis, and then click OK.

8 Click the underlined Opacity value and type **70**, and then click OK.

9 Drag the current-time marker to 4:00.

Using the keyframe navigator box

Now you'll create keyframes without changing the property values.

1 Click the Position and Opacity keyframe navigator boxes, which are located to the right of the underlined values. When you click in a navigator box, you create a keyframe without changing the property value.
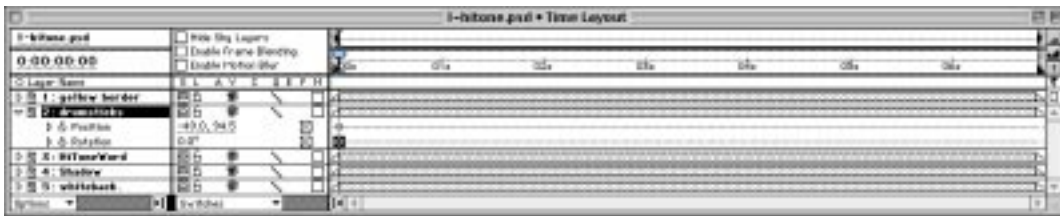

2 Drag the current-time marker to 6:00.

3 Click the underlined Position value and type **123** for the x-axis; then click OK.

4 Click the underlined Opacity value and type **0**, and then click OK.

5 Press Home to return to 0:00.

6 Click the arrow next to the Shadow layer to collapse the outline.

Editing the Drumsticks layer

1 Select the Drumsticks layer and press **p** to open the Position property and **Shift +r** to open the Rotation property.

2 Select the pointer tool, and then, in the 1-HiTone.psd composition window, drag the drumsticks image to the left of the screen.

3 Click the Position and Rotation stopwatches to create keyframes.

4 Drag the current-time marker to 2:00.

5 Click the underlined Position value and type **189** for the x-axis; then press Tab and type **75** for the y-axis, and then click OK.

6 Drag the current-time marker to 4:00 and select the Position keyframe navigator box.

7 Drag the current-time marker to 6:00.

8 Click the underlined Position value and type **410** for the x-axis; then click OK.

9 Click the underlined Rotation value and type **8** in the Revolutions text box, and then click OK

10 Press Home to return to 0:00.

11 Press the spacebar to preview your changes and then press it again to stop the preview.


12 Click the arrow next to the Drumsticks layer to collapse the outline.

Nesting a composition

Nesting a composition means placing one composition inside another. Nesting compositions is an efficient way of managing multiple layers with multiple effects.

1 Close the 1-HiTone.psd composition window and Time Layout window.

2 In the HiTone Intro composition, make sure the current-time marker is at 0:00, and then drag 1-HiTone.psd composition from the Project window to the center of the HiTone Intro Composition window.
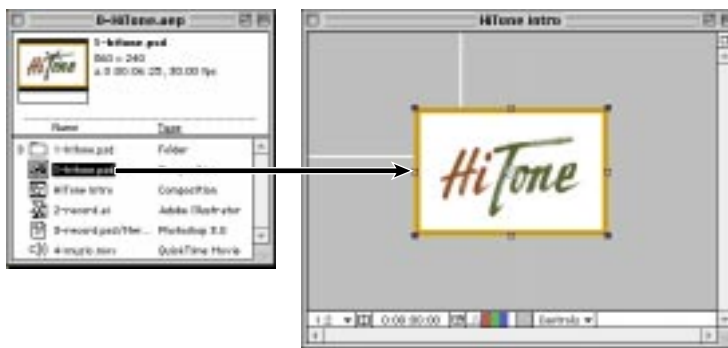
3 In the Time Layout window, drag the 1-HiTone.psd composition layer below the 3-record.psd layer.

4 Press the spacebar to preview your edits and then press it again to stop the preview.

5 Choose File > Save Project.

You just created a nested composition—also referred to as a "comp within a comp."

Working with Adobe Illustrator files

After Effects preserves the vector format of imported Adobe Illustrator files. The vector format ensures resolution independence so type displays at high quality even when scaled much larger than the original.

1 Press Home to return to 0:00.

2 Drag 2-record.ai from the Project window to the center of the HiTone Intro Composition window.

3 Select the 2-record.ai layer in the Time Layout window, and then press **s** to open the Scale property.

4 Click the underlined Scale value and type **1800**; then click OK.

When you type a value for a property and don't set a key frame, the value remains constant for the duration of the composition, and does not change over time.

5 Click the Collapse Geometrics/Continuously Rasterize switch for the 2-record.ai layer.

When you select this switch, After Effects rasterizes the Illustrator file after each edit to maintain a high quality appearance.
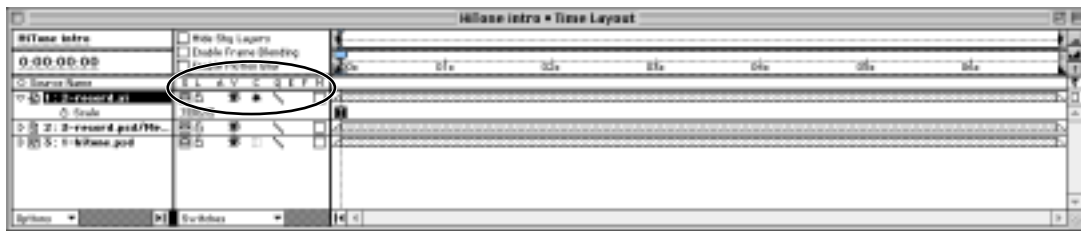
The Video switch (⬙) controls whether or not a layer appears in the composition. The Collapse Geometrics/Continuously Rasterize switch (✳) controls image rasterization. The Quality switch (⬎) controls the quality of the layer's preview.

6 Click the Quality switch three times to toggle between the wireframe, draft, and best quality previews.

A. *Wireframe* **B.** *Draft quality* **C.** *Best quality*

7 Press **p** to open the Position property; then click the Position stopwatch to create a keyframe.

8 Click the underlined Position value and type **1307** for the x-axis; then press Tab and type **140** for the y-axis. Click OK.

9 Press **Shift** + **t** to open the Opacity property, click the underlined value and type **20**; then click OK. As with the Scale value, you won't create a keyframe for this property, so the 20% opacity value will affect the layer for the duration of the composition.

10 Drag the current-time marker to 1:00.

11 Click the underlined Position value and type -**940** for the x-axis; press Tab and type **140.6** for the y-axis. Click OK.

12 Press Home to return to 0:00.

13 Press the spacebar to preview your edits and press it again to stop the preview.

14 Press Home to return to 0:00.

15 Click the arrow next to the 2-record.ai layer to collapse the outline.

Special effects

After Effects includes more than 60 time-varying special effects. Like the Position and Scale properties you've just worked with, you can animate these time-varying effects using keyframes. You can intensify effects and apply multiple effects to each layer of your composition. In addition to all the features in the After Effects standard version, the After Effects Production Bundle includes three sets of advanced tools: Distortion Pack, Keying Pack, and Motion Pack.

1 Click the current-time indicator on the Time Layout window and type **10** in the Go To Time text box; then click OK.

2 Select the 3-record.psd layer and choose Effect > Perspective > Basic 3D.

3 Press **e** to expand the Basic 3D properties outline in the Time Layout window; then click the Basic 3D arrow to expand the outline further.
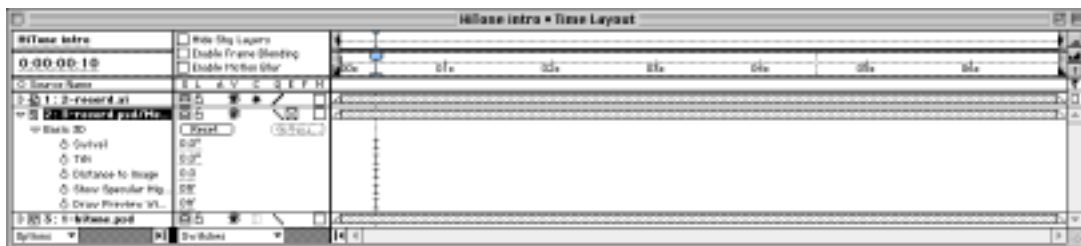
4 Click the Swivel stopwatch to set a keyframe.

5 Click the underlined OFF value beside Show Specular Highlight to turn it on. This option adds a reflective glint of light to the rotated object.It only renders (displays) when Layer is in Best quality mode.

6 Drag the current-time marker to 2:00.

7 Click the underlined Swivel value and type **4** in the Revolutions text box, and then click OK.
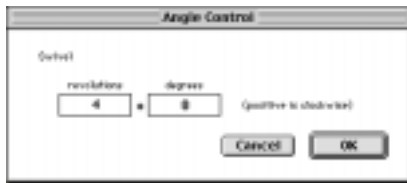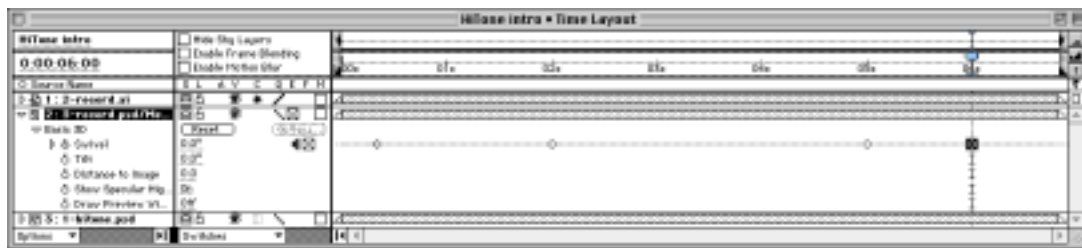

8 Drag the current-time marker to 5:00.

9 Click the underlined Swivel value and type -**2** in the Revolutions text box, and then click OK.

10 Drag the current-time marker to 6:00.

11 Click the underlined Swivel value and type **0** in the Revolutions text box; then click OK.

Your Time Layout window should look like this:

12 Press the spacebar to preview the effect, and press it again to stop the preview.

Adding audio

Now let's clean up the Time Layout window and add an audio file.

1 Click the arrow next to Layer 2 to collapse the outline.

2 Press Home to return to 0:00.

3 Close the Effects Controls dialog box; then drag 4-music.mov from the Project window to the HiTone Intro Time Layout window.

4 Press Home, and then choose Composition > Preview > Audio (Here Forward).

Congratulations on completing the tutorial! If you have the full version of After Effects, you could now render the composition into a movie.