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Learn how layers are stacked, trimmed, and adjusted to build compositions.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED ^

Get files

Download sample files to practice with (ZIP, 43 MB)

This sample file is an Adobe Stock asset you can use to practice what you learn in this tutorial. If you want to use the sample file beyond this tutorial, you can purchase a license on [Adobe Stock](#). Check out the ReadMe file in the folder for the terms that apply to your use of this sample file.

Now viewing



Understand how layers build compositions

Up next



Add layers to a composition



Position 2D layers in 3D space

View again



Position and distribute layers in a composition

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What you learned: Adjust layers to fine-tune the appearance of a composition

How layers build compositions

Layers stack vertically to build compositions and can be adjusted horizontally over time to create animation within compositions.

Deselect all layers

- Click in the empty area at the bottom of the timeline to deselect all layers.

Press the spacebar to preview the animation and to stop playback

- Once all layers are deselected, press the spacebar to preview the animation.
- Press the spacebar again to stop playback when you want to stop the preview.

Make adjustments to a layer

1. Select Layer 3 in the timeline.
2. Open its layer options by clicking the arrow to the left of the layer number.

Every visible layer in the timeline has Transform properties

The Transform property group contains settings for adjusting the Anchor Point, Position, Scale, Rotation, and Opacity properties of a layer.

Blend modes are another method for changing how layers interact with each other

- Click the Toggle Switches/Modes button to toggle between switches and modes in the timeline.

- Change the blend mode for Layer 3 to Multiply.

Turn layer visibility on and off

- Enable visibility of Layer 6 in the timeline by clicking the switch on the left side of the timeline.

Scrubbing is a method for changing the value of any parameter in After Effects

You can drag any blue parameter value to change the value of that parameter. Scrubbing values in the timeline allow you to preview the changes in the Composition panel as you scrub.

Reposition the current-time indicator in the timeline using keyboard shortcuts

- With Layer 4 selected in the timeline, press I on your keyboard to move the current-time indicator to the In point of that layer.

Trim layers using keyboard shortcuts

- Select Layer 6 and press Option (Alt) + [to trim the layer to start at the current-time indicator.

Rename layers in the timeline

- Select Layer 1 in the timeline and press Return (Enter) on your keyboard to edit the layer name, and press Return (Enter) again to set the name change.

Want to change or move to the Out point of a layer?

- To move the current-time indicator to the Out point of a selected layer, press O on your keyboard.

- To trim the end point of a layer, select the layer and press Option (Alt) +] on your keyboard.

Tip: Using keyboard shortcuts will speed up your workflow in After Effects.

Up next: [Add layers](#)

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