50 Essential Tips, Expressions and Shortcuts for After Effects
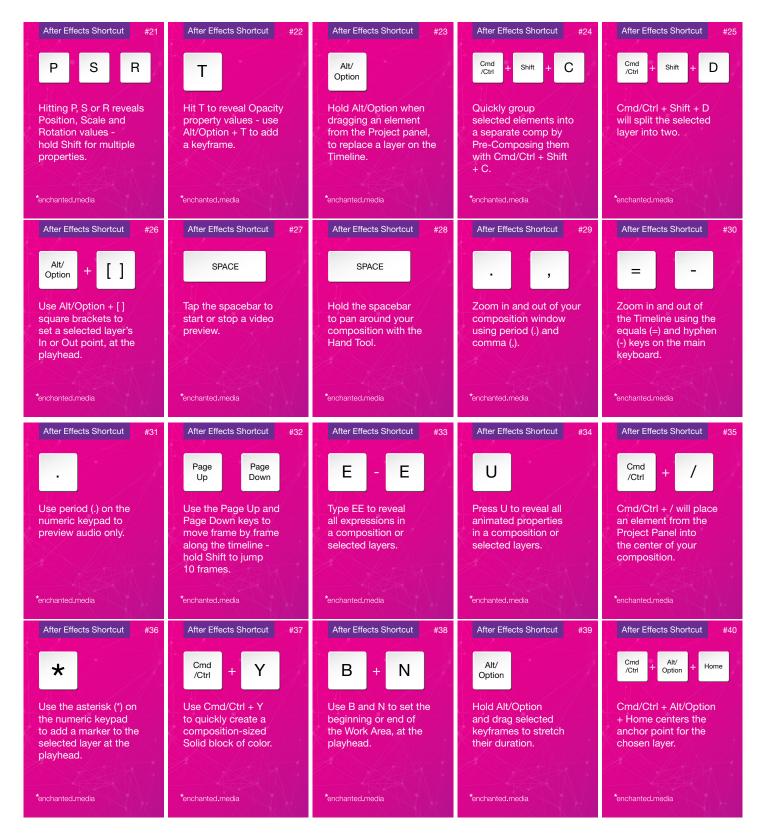
Handy Tips For After Effects

After Effects Tip #01

Need to quickly trim your comp duration?

Right-click on your work area and choose 'Trim Comp to Work Area'.

*enchanted.media

After Effects Tip #02

Getting swamped with too many layers?

Use the **Shy switch** to hide the ones you're not working on.

*enchanted.media

After Effects Tip #03

Need to resize several elements at once?

Parent layers to a single **Null object** and scale the Null.

*enchanted.media

After Effects Tip #04

Need to quickly group together multiple elements?

With your layers selected, right-click and choose 'Pre-compose'.

*enchanted.media

After Effects Tip #05

Want to copy and paste expressions to multiple layers?

With the animated property selected use Edit > Copy Expression Only then Edit > Paste to selected layers.

*enchanted.media

After Effects Tip #06

Need a bit more width or height on your footage?

Increase the Output Width/Height on a **Motion Tile effect** (Mirror Edges) to expand your footage.

*enchanted.media

After Effects Tip #07

Want to subtly darken the edges of your frame?

Use **CC Vignette** to draw focus to the center of your video.

*enchanted.media

After Effects Tip #08

Want to quickly experiment with different colors?

Add the **Effect > Color Correction > Hue/ Saturation** and rotate the Master Hue.

*enchanted.media

After Effects Tip #09

Need to keyframe vertical and horizontal positions individually?

Right-click on Position and choose 'Separate Dimensions'.

*enchanted.media

After Effects Tip #10

Need to add an additional set of keyframes to scale, rotation , position or opacity?

Add the **Effect > Distort > Transform** for a fresh set of transformation properties.

*enchanted.media

After Effects Tip #11

Want to quickly make your text look grungy hand-drawn?

Add **Effect > Stylize > Roughen Edges** and adjust Border and Scale options to suite.

*enchanted.media

After Effects Tip #12

Want to instantly make your footage look vintage?

Add **Effect > Color Correction > Tritone** for a quick sepia tone.

*enchanted.media

After Effects Tip #13

Guide Layers will not render.

Any layer you turn into a **Guide Layer** will not appear in your final render, or parent compositions.

*enchanted.media

After Effects Tip #14

Need several layers to follow a single layer's animation?

Connect layers to the 'Parent' layer you wish to follow using the **pick whip** tool.

*enchanted.media

After Effects Tip #15

Want a gallery of all the built-in effects and presets?

Go to **Animation > Browse Presets** (opens in Bridge).

*enchanted.media

After Effects Tip #16

Want to stagger multiple layers evenly along the Timeline.

Right-click your selected layers and choose **Keyframe Assistant > Sequence Layers…**

*enchanted.media

After Effects Tip #17

Need to scale or rotate from a point off-center?

Layers scale and rotate from their Anchor Point. Use the **Pan-behind** tool to move this.

*enchanted.media

After Effects Tip #18

Want to evenly distribute multiple elements?

With the **Window > Align** panel, just like Illustrator, you can distribute and line up objects evenly.

*enchanted.media

After Effects Tip #19

Need to turn black parts of black and white image/footage transparent?

The easiest and quickest way by far is to turn the layer's **Blending Mode** to **Screen**.

*enchanted.media

After Effects Tip #20

Want to apply an effect to multiple layers easily?

Effects used on **Adjustment Layers** are applied to all layers underneath.

*enchanted.media

50 Essential Tips, Expressions and Shortcuts for After Effects

Essential AE Keyboard Shortcuts

After Effects Shortcut #21	After Effects Shortcut #22	After Effects Shortcut #23	After Effects Shortcut #24	After Effects Shortcut #25
P S R	**T**	**Alt/ Option**	**Cmd /Ctrl + Shift + C**	**Cmd /Ctrl + Shift + D**
Hitting P, S or R reveals Position, Scale and Rotation values - hold Shift for multiple properties.	Hit T to reveal Opacity property values - use Alt/Option + T to add a keyframe.	Hold Alt/Option when dragging an element from the Project panel, to replace a layer on the Timeline.	Quickly group selected elements into a separate comp by Pre-Composing them with Cmd/Ctrl + Shift + C.	Cmd/Ctrl + Shift + D will split the selected layer into two.
*enchanted.media	*enchanted.media	*enchanted.media	*enchanted.media	*enchanted.media
After Effects Shortcut #26	After Effects Shortcut #27	After Effects Shortcut #28	After Effects Shortcut #29	After Effects Shortcut #30
Alt/ Option + [ ]	**SPACE**	**SPACE**	**. ,**	**= -**
Use Alt/Option + [ ] square brackets to set a selected layer's In or Out point, at the playhead.	Tap the spacebar to start or stop a video preview.	Hold the spacebar to pan around your composition with the Hand Tool.	Zoom in and out of your composition window using period (.) and comma (,).	Zoom in and out of the Timeline using the equals (=) and hyphen (-) keys on the main keyboard.
*enchanted.media	*enchanted.media	*enchanted.media	*enchanted.media	*enchanted.media
After Effects Shortcut #31	After Effects Shortcut #32	After Effects Shortcut #33	After Effects Shortcut #34	After Effects Shortcut #35
.	**Page Up Page Down**	**E - E**	**U**	**Cmd /Ctrl + /**
Use period (.) on the numeric keypad to preview audio only.	Use the Page Up and Page Down keys to move frame by frame along the timeline - hold Shift to jump 10 frames.	Type EE to reveal all expressions in a composition or selected layers.	Press U to reveal all animated properties in a composition or selected layers.	Cmd/Ctrl + / will place an element from the Project Panel into the center of your composition.
*enchanted.media	*enchanted.media	*enchanted.media	*enchanted.media	*enchanted.media
After Effects Shortcut #36	After Effects Shortcut #37	After Effects Shortcut #38	After Effects Shortcut #39	After Effects Shortcut #40
*	**Cmd /Ctrl + Y**	**B + N**	**Alt/ Option**	**Cmd /Ctrl + Alt/ Option + Home**
Use the asterisk (*) on the numeric keypad to add a marker to the selected layer at the playhead.	Use Cmd/Ctrl + Y to quickly create a composition-sized Solid block of color.	Use B and N to set the beginning or end of the Work Area, at the playhead.	Hold Alt/Option and drag selected keyframes to stretch their duration.	Cmd/Ctrl + Alt/Option + Home centers the anchor point for the chosen layer.
*enchanted.media	*enchanted.media	*enchanted.media	*enchanted.media	*enchanted.media

50 Essential Tips,
Expressions and Shortcuts for After Effects

Useful After Effects Expressions

After Effects Expression #41
wiggle (2, 30)
Randomly changes the property's current value, 2 times every second, between ±30.
Perfect for random, jiggly movement.
*enchanted.media

After Effects Expression #42
time*10
Creates an automatic value by multiplying each passing second by 10.
Perfect for automated animation.
*enchanted.media

After Effects Expression #43
loopOut (type = "cycle")
Repeats all keyframed animation, after the last keyframe, for the duration of the comp. Perfect for creating animated loops.
*enchanted.media

After Effects Expression #44
linear (time,inPoint,outPoint, value,value+[10,10])
Increase a layer's scale by 10%, over the time, between its In and Out points. A quick and easy way to add motion to still images.
*enchanted.media

After Effects Expression #45
w = wiggle(2,30); [w[0],w[0]]
Randomly changes a double-value property's current value, 2 times every second, between ±30. Ensures there's no distortion when used on the Scale property.
*enchanted.media

After Effects Expression #46
thisComp. layer(index-1). transform.rotation+20
Retrieve values from layers above or below using the layer Index. This expression rotates a layer 20 degrees more than the one above it. Try duplicating it!
*enchanted.media

After Effects Expression #47
loopOut (type="offset", 0)
Continually repeats a set of keyframes, accumulating the value changes, for the duration of the comp. Perfect for creating animated loops.
*enchanted.media

After Effects Expression #48
w=wiggle (2,200); clamp(w,0,100)
Ensures a value doesn't breach set amounts. Here, the object has random (wiggle) movement but cannot go below 0 or above 200.
*enchanted.media

After Effects Expression #49
posterizeTime(0); random(100)
The random expression creates an arbitrary value on each frame. By using Posterize Time this expression creates a static random value between 0 and 100.
*enchanted.media

After Effects Expression #50
value+10 value-10 value*10
The 'value' term modifies the property's current value. Handy when making further adjustments to an existing set of keyframes.
*enchanted.media