

Sample Hands-On-Training™ Chapter – Review Copy Only

Copyright ©2003 by lynda.com, Inc. All Rights Reserved.

Reproduction and Distribution Strictly Prohibited.

This electronically distributed Hands-On-Training™ document is for review purposes only and is intended for on-screen viewing only. Any printing, reproduction, copying, distribution, and/or transmission of this document are strictly prohibited without written consent from lynda.com, Inc.

Contact Information

Garo Green (garo@lynda.com)

Director of Publications

lynda.com, Inc.

PO Box 789

Ojai, California 93024

Phone: 805-646-7076

Fax: 805-640-9607

Notice of Rights

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the lynda.com, Inc. For information on getting permission for reprints and excerpts, contact garo@lynda.com.

Notice of Liability

The information in this book is distributed on an “As Is” basis, without warranty. While every precaution has been taken in the preparation of the book, neither the author nor Peachpit Press shall have any liability to any person or entity with respect to any loss or damage caused or alleged to be caused directly or indirectly by the instructions contained in this book or by the computer software and hardware products described in it.

Trademarks

Hands-On-Training is a registered trademark of lynda.com, Inc. Macromedia is a registered trademark. Macromedia Dreamweaver and Dreamweaver, and Macromedia Fireworks and Fireworks are registered trademarks of Macromedia, Inc., in the U.S. and/or other countries. Adobe Photoshop, Adobe Photoshop Elements 2, Adobe Acrobat 6, and Adobe After Effects 6 are registered trademarks of Adobe, Inc. QuickTime and the QuickTime logo are trademarks used under license. The QuickTime logo is registered in the U.S. and other countries.

2.

Interface

First View	Project Window	
Composition Window	Timeline	
Time Controls Palette	Audio Palette	Info & Tool Palettes
Shortcut Keys	Using the Interface	

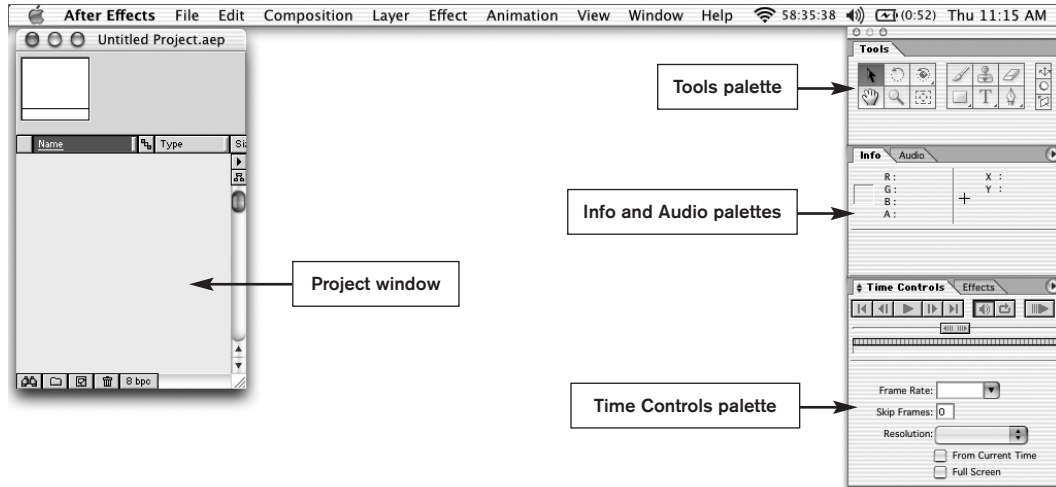
chap_02

After Effects 6
H•O•T CD-ROM

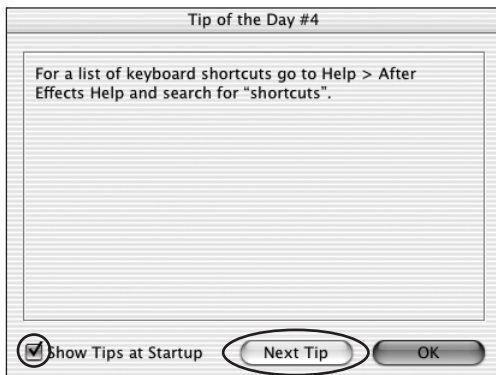
Adobe provides a consistent interface throughout its products. If you've used Photoshop or Illustrator, many of the tools in After Effects will be familiar to you. On the other hand, After Effects is based on some concepts and features that might be new to you, and for this reason the interface is distinct as well.

Because the program requires assets, such as movies, sounds, and images (called footage), it has a Project window that stores all these types of items. It also has a Timeline window for setting up the motion for your moving images and a Composition window that acts as a stage where you can build, preview, and edit your projects. When working in After Effects, you'll primarily use these three windows. This chapter gives you a quick overview of these windows and walks you through a simple project so you can see how the interface changes in relation to your content. Other chapters will go into much more detail. As you'll see later, the After Effects interface gets a lot deeper when you start to build projects and moving pictures.

First View of After Effects



This is what you'll see the first time you open After Effects and create a new project. On Mac, the windows and palettes that open by default include the Project window, the Tools palette, the Info and Audio palettes, and the Time Controls and Effects palettes. In Windows, the default palettes are Tools, Info and Audio, and Time Controls and Effects. None of these windows and palettes do anything until you bring content such as movie footage, Photoshop files, Illustrator files, or other supported document types into the program. You'll learn how to bring in footage very soon!



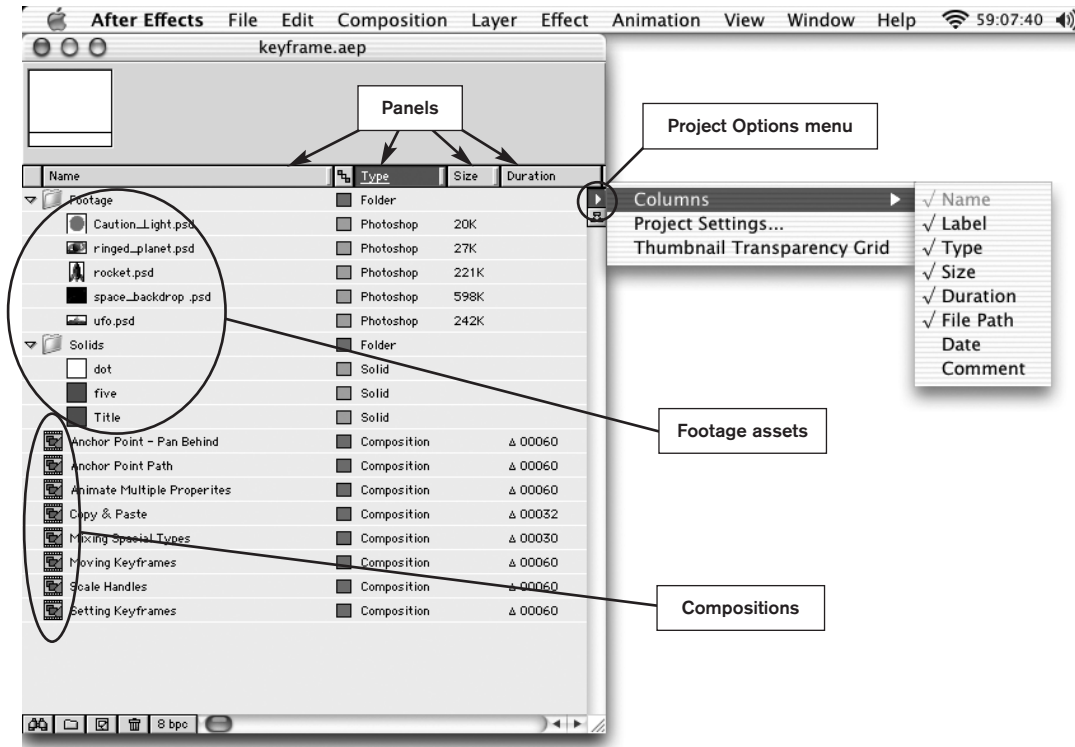
Tips appear by default each time the program opens. Reading them can be incredibly useful, and you can cycle through more than one tip by clicking the **Next Tip** button. If you don't want to see tips on startup, uncheck the **Show Tips at Startup** check box, and they will disappear. You can always get them back by choosing **Help > Tip of The Day**.

The Project Window

After Effects is different from many other programs that you might be familiar with because it uses something called the **project** to organize content and store the settings you create to produce animation and output audio. When you bring artwork into Photoshop, for example, that artwork is saved with the Photoshop document. The project file in After Effects is quite different because the project file only maintains pointers to whatever artwork you import. For this reason, After Effects project file sizes are quite small. They are also incredibly important because without a project, you can't work in After Effects at all.

The **Project window** is one of the three primary windows you use in After Effects. Think of it as where you store all the media you'll be working with—from still images to video footage to sounds. The word **footage** is an umbrella term for most media, even still images or audio. Importing or adding footage into your project creates references in the Project window. This means that the footage isn't actually copied into After Effects; instead, the project maintains pointers to where the footage resides on your hard drive.

Whenever you open a new After Effects project, a new empty Project window appears. When you import footage, it appears in the Project window. When you save your work, you save a project file, hence the file extension **.aep (After Effects Project)**. The project file memorizes all kinds of things, including, but not limited to, the footage references of content you've imported. Think of After Effects as “linking” to the footage, whereas programs such as Photoshop or Illustrator “embed” content. This process will become much clearer as you work through the book.

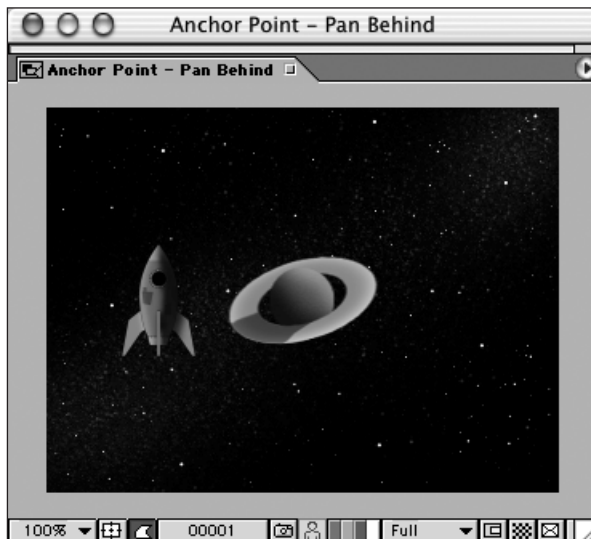


Here's an example of a Project window that is filled with content. In order to see all this content, you would need to expand the Project window by dragging on its lower-right corner. Footage assets and compositions show up as a list in the Project window. This window can be stretched wider by dragging on the lower-right corner.

Panels in the Project window allow you to view details about your footage or composition. A composition in After Effects is a type of file that you will learn how to create in which you combine all your layers of content and set it to animate over a Timeline. You'll learn all about compositions in Chapter 4, "The Composition". Panels form columns of information showing the name, label, size, type, file path, comments, date, and duration of each item. You can make a panel wider or narrower, and you can rearrange the order of panels simply by clicking and dragging the panel you want to move.

The Composition Window

The **Composition window** is the second of the three primary windows. Whereas the Project window contains a list of files and folders, the Composition window is where the visual preview or playback of your project appears. It's the equivalent of a screen area in a movie theater, except that you can have multiple compositions within a single project. A project is more like the movie theater complex where they are showing lots of movies, and each movie is represented by a composition! That's a silly analogy perhaps, but you are not limited to one composition per project—you can have hundreds of compositions per project, in fact. You can even nest compositions within compositions. The Composition window does not appear until you create a composition. You create a composition file from the Project window. You will see how to open a composition later in this chapter.



The Composition window is the equivalent of a stage or movie screen. It is where the visual preview of your work appears. The Composition window does not appear until you create and/or open a composition. You'll learn how to do this later in this chapter. You'll learn more about the features of this window in Chapter 4, "The Composition."

The Timeline Window

The **Timeline window** is the third primary window you use in After Effects. Like the Composition window, the Timeline window does not appear until you have opened a composition. It will be missing from your screen until you do this in Exercise 1, later in this chapter.

The main function of the Timeline window is to give you the ability to control time relationships between the various footage elements in your composition.

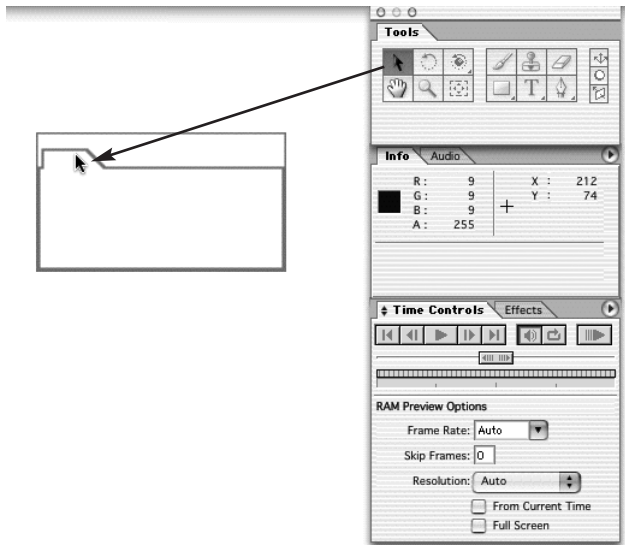


Footage elements are arranged in layers in the Timeline window. The length of each layer represents its duration in time. You can cause each layer to start or stop (be visible or invisible) at any point in the composition by adjusting it in the Timeline. You will learn more about the Timeline in Chapter 5, "Timeline, Keyframes, and Animation," as well as throughout the entire book.

Palette Organization

The palettes in After Effects can be pulled apart, reorganized, and restored easily. What distinguishes a palette from a window? A palette includes a tab; a window does not. This tab can be used to view or move a palette.

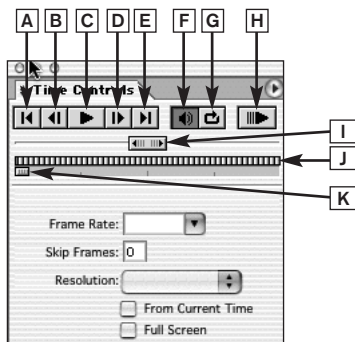
For example, the following palette group opens by default in the After Effects interface: Tools, Info, Audio, Time Controls, and Effects. If you select **Window > Tools**, all the palettes open that are connected together with Tools (Info, Audio, Time Controls, and Effects). If you separate Tools away from the group, it can be accessed independently.



Palettes can be separated and re-attached by dragging them on and off palette groupings by their tabs. To reset all your palettes to their default positions (which comes in handy if your screen gets too chaotic!), choose **Window > Reset Palette Locations**.

Time Controls Palette

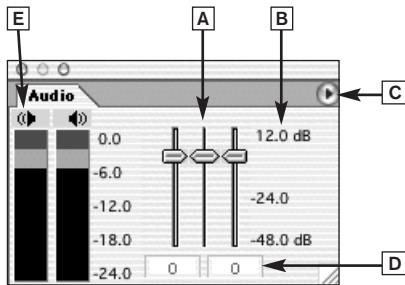
The **Time Controls palette** allows you to preview the compositions you create as moving images. You can play back the entire piece or select a specific frame.



The Time Controls palette: **A**. First Frame **B**. Previous Frame **C**. Play/Pause **D**. Next Frame **E**. Last Frame **F**. Audio **G**. Loop **H**. RAM Preview **I**. Shuttle **J**. Jog **K**. Time Indicator. These terms are defined in Chapter 5, "Timeline, Keyframes, and Animation."

Audio Palette

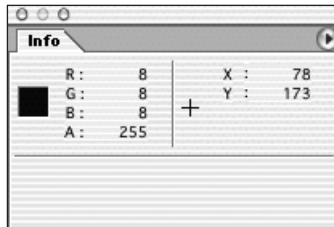
On Mac, by default, the **Audio palette** is located in the same window as the Time Controls palette. On Windows, it is grouped with the Info palette. You can separate the Audio palette into its own window by clicking and dragging the **Audio** tab.



*The Audio palette: **A.** Level controls **B.** Level units **C.** Audio Options menu **D.** Level values **E.** Audio Clipping warning icons **F.** VU (Volume Unit) meter. The audio level controls allow you to set the volume for each audio layer. The VU meter displays audio levels during playback. You will learn about these terms in Chapter 17, "Audio."*

Info Palette

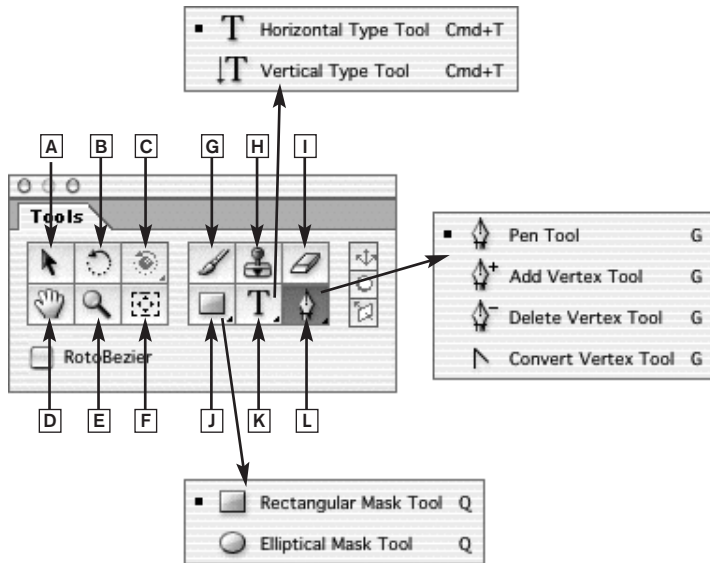
The **Info palette** gives you information about images in the Composition window.



The Info palette offers color, alpha transparency, and coordinate information. You'll learn more about these topics throughout the book.

Tools Palette

The **Tools palette** provides a number of tools for drawing in the Composition window or for selecting elements and objects.



The Tools palette: A. Selection B. Rotation C. Orbit Camera D. Hand E. Zoom F. Pan Behind G. Brush (new!) H. Clone Stamp (new!) I. Eraser (new!) J. Mask K. Type (new!) L. Pen. Note that some of these tools are new and reflect the capability of After Effects 6.0 to paint and type directly (rather than using external programs). You will learn about these different tools in future chapters.

Shortcut Keys

There are many shortcut keys in After Effects, and all of them are listed in your program manual. The following chart lists the ones we find most useful. The book will refer to specific shortcut keys throughout the chapters as you encounter reasons to use them, so don't spend too much time memorizing them here. Consider copying this list and taping it to your monitor! This list will prove invaluable to you after you have learned the program.

Shortcuts in After Effects		
Command	Mac	Windows
Import file	Cmd+I	Ctrl+I
Project settings	Cmd+Option+Shift+K	Ctrl+Alt+Shift+K
Suspend window updates	Caps Lock	Caps Lock
Display/hide palettes	Tab	Tab
Step forward one frame	Cmd+right arrow	Ctrl+right arrow
Step backward one frame	Cmd+left arrow	Ctrl+left arrow
Start/pause playback	Spacebar	Spacebar
RAM preview	0 on numeric keypad	0 on numeric keypad
Nudge layer one pixel in specific direction	Arrow key	Arrow key
Select next layer back	Cmd+down arrow	Ctrl+down arrow
Select next layer forward	Cmd+up arrow	Ctrl+up arrow
Zoom in	. (period)	. (period)
Zoom out	, (comma)	, (comma)
Zoom in and resize window	Option +. (period)	Alt + . (period)
Zoom out and resize window	Option + , (comma)	Alt + , (comma)
Switch from Selection tool to Pen tool	Hold down Cmd	Hold down Ctrl

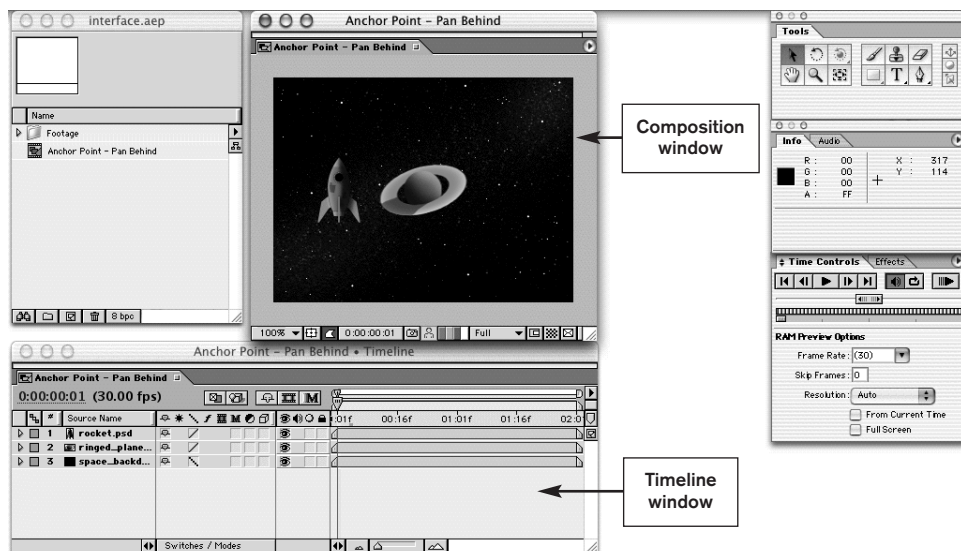
I.

Using the After Effects Interface

This exercise introduces you to the three primary windows in After Effects and lets you explore the basic functionality of each. An After Effects project file has been prepared for you in advance that you will open in this exercise.

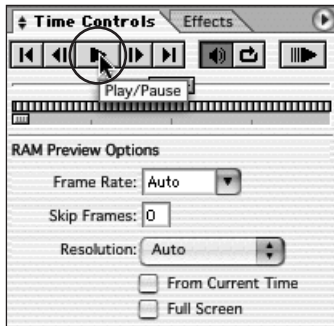
1. Launch After Effects and open **interface.aep** from the **chap_02** folder that you have transferred to your hard drive from the **H•O•T CD-ROM**.

Note: *It's very important that you transfer these files to your hard drive so that you can edit them in the future.*

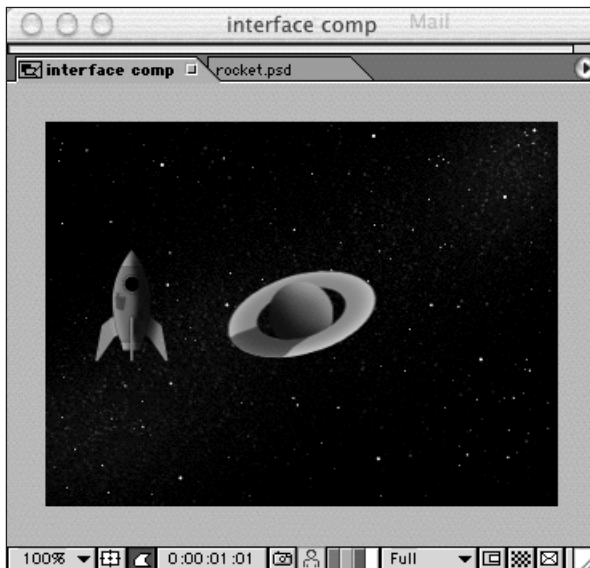


Notice that the *Composition window* and the *Timeline window* are open. Inside the *Composition window*, you'll see a preview of some artwork. Inside the *Timeline window*, you'll see a number of layers with a lot of settings. These settings will be described in detail in later chapters.

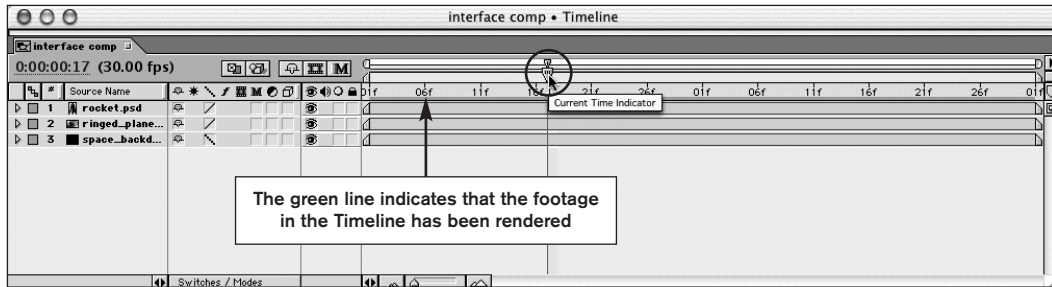
Note: *If your windows are disorganized because of moving them in the last chapter, choose **Window > Reset Palette Locations**.*



2. In the **Time Controls** palette, locate the **Play** button and click it. You can accomplish the same thing by pressing its shortcut key, the **spacebar**.

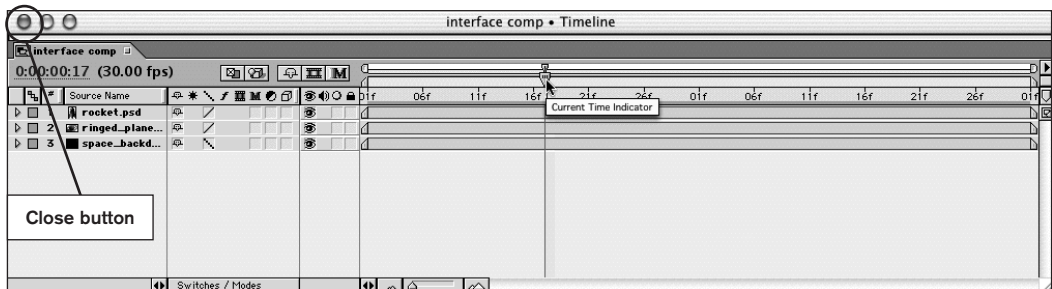


3. Watch the animation play as a preview in the **Composition window**. Click the **Play** button again in the **Time Controls** window or press the **spacebar** to pause the animation.



4. In the **Timeline** window, locate the **Current Time Indicator**. Drag the **Current Time Indicator** left and right, and observe how its position affects the preview in the Composition window. This process is also known as “scrubbing” in the video editing industry.

Notice the green line in the Timeline window? This appears as After Effects “renders” the content to preview and play back. This green line will become a familiar cue to you as you work through the book’s exercises. As you add things such as Effects and 3D, playback can take longer because it takes longer to render the footage. It’s helpful that you can position the Current Time Indicator to a specific frame, because sometimes you want to check a certain part of the Timeline but don’t want to watch the playback of the entire composition.



5. Click the **Close** button to close the Composition window. **Note:** The Close button for Windows users is in the upper-right corner of the Composition window.

*Observe that the Timeline window also closes. Without an open composition, the Timeline will not appear. To get the Timeline and the Composition windows back, simply double-click **interface comp** in the Project window.*

6. Close the project and don't save your changes. You can either quit After Effects or leave it open for the next chapter. You might want to choose **Window > Reset Palette Locations** to make sure that your palette positions in After Effects look the same for future chapters as they do in the book's examples.

Congratulations! You've completed your first exercise, and you got a good look at the After Effects interface. Best of all, you've been able to interact with After Effects and see results firsthand. In the next chapter, you'll learn more of the details involved in creating After Effect projects. Soon you'll be making your own compositions, making them move, and saving movies. Keep reading on!
