Adobe Certified Professional in Visual Effects & Motion Graphics Using Adobe After Effects

Exam version: 2025 (v 25.x)

Adobe Certified Professional certifications— delivered by Certiport—are the official, industry-recognized credentials that validate proficiency in Adobe Creative Cloud applications and foundational knowledge for digital media careers.

The 50-minute *Visual Effects & Motion Graphics Using Adobe After Effects* exam is comprised of two sections—selected-response items followed by Live-in-the-App tasks in After Effects—and designed at the level appropriate for the following Target Candidate:

> *The Target Candidate has approximately 150 hours of instruction and hands-on experience with After Effects. They are familiar with product features and capabilities as well as relevant career concepts. They are generally self-sufficient and able to apply knowledge of basic graphic and motion design principles and animation techniques to perform core tasks involved in their job role with limited assistance from peers, product documentation, or support services. They generally work independently or in collaboration with colleagues, with minimal supervision. Furthermore, they are able to answer most routine conceptual and applied questions about how to use After Effects and usually do not have to refer basic questions to others. They can speak credibly to other users or clients about what can be done with After Effects and how to use it effectively.*

1. Working in the Visual Effects and Motion Graphics Industry

This objective covers critical concepts related to working with colleagues and clients, as well as crucial legal, technical, and design-related knowledge.

1.1 Identify terminology and interpret communication relating to purpose, clients, and audience needs for preparing visual effects and motion graphics projects.

1.1.a Determine whether content is relevant to the purpose, audience, and audience needs.

i. *Key Terms: client goals, target audience, demographics*

1.1.b Identify requirements based on how the project will be delivered, distributed, and/or consumed.

i. *Key Terms: File sharing, compression, codec, input and output file formats, aspect ratio*

ii. *Key Concepts: Selecting the correct codec based on import and delivery requirements.*

1.1.c Demonstrate and apply knowledge of accessibility standards and best practices for motion design or graphics content.

i. *Key Concepts: legible text overlays, proper color contrast, sensory triggers and motion sensitivity, designing for color blindness, contrast and color accessibility, visual spacing and readability, text sizing and font accessibility*

1.1.d Demonstrate techniques for creating assets and projects based on communication from clients and colleagues.

i. *Key Terms: Pre-production, planning, shot list, script writing, storyboarding, design compositions or sketches, style guides, and animatics, creative brief, mood board*

1.1.e Demonstrate basic project management concepts.

i. *Key Terms: Scope and sequence, setup, meeting deadlines and budgets, tech sheet*

1.2 Assess intellectual property rights, permissions, and licensing required to use specific content.

1.2.a Determine legal and ethical considerations for using third-party content.

i. *Key Terms: Usage rights, copyright, intellectual property, derivative work, commercial use policies, attribution, work for hire, fair use, fair dealing, remixing, AI-generated content*

1.2.b Determine when and how to obtain permission to use images, audio, or video.

i. *Key Terms: talent release, rights, permissions, licensing, attribution, public spaces, releases*

ii. *Key Concepts: permission to use an image is separate from permission to use a person's face or a restricted location, etc.*

1.3 Demonstrate an understanding of terminology and knowledge of motion design and graphics principles.

1.3.a Demonstrate knowledge of motion design, visual effects, and graphics terminology.

i. *Key Terms: frame rate, title/action safe zones (areas), frame size, file formats, video codecs, pixels, rendering, effects, waveforms, audio syncing, keyframing, bit depth, color spaces, lighting, working in 3D space, rotoscoping, masking, blending modes, compositing*

1.3.b Demonstrate knowledge of the twelve principles of animation.

i. *Key Terms: easing, squashing, stretching, anticipation, staging, straight-ahead action and pose-to-pose, follow through and overlapping action, slow in and slow out, arc, secondary action, timing, exaggeration, solid drawing, appeal.*

1.3.c Define principles of film form terms.

i. *Key Terms: aspect ratio, rule of thirds, foreground, background, tone, contrast, cropping, depth of field, field of view, match moving, etc.*

1.3.d Identify principles of art and elements of design.

i. *Key Terms: space, line, shape, form, color, texture, emphasis/focal point, unity/harmony, variety, balance, alignment, proximity, repetition, rhythm, scale, movement, negative space, gestalt, depth, etc.*

2. Project Setup and Interface

This objective covers the interface setup and program settings.

2.1 Create and modify projects and compositions.

2.1.a Modify project settings for performance and playback.

i. *Key Settings: Video Rendering and Effects (GPU)*

2.1.b Create and modify compositions to match the delivery requirements.

i. *Key Concepts: frame rate, frame size, resolution, duration, pixel aspect ratio, presets, adjusting the work area, background color, naming compositions, composition from footage*

2.1.c Configure application preferences.

i. *Key Settings: Appearance, Auto-Save, Grids & Guides, Media & Disk Cache, Memory, Previews, etc.*

2.2 Navigate, organize, and customize the application using design tools.

2.2.a Identify, navigate, and manipulate elements of the After Effects interface.

i. *Key Concepts: menus, toolbars, panels, navigating, magnifying the composition, searching within panels, etc.*

ii. *Key Panels: Project panel, Timeline panel, Composition panel, Preview panel, Effects & Presets panel, Effect Controls panel, Layer panel, Properties panel*

2.2.b Customize and manage workspaces.

i. *Key Concepts: using/switching workspaces; showing, hiding, grouping, and docking panels; Workspace menu; assigning shortcuts; customizing, saving, and resetting workspaces; non-visible design tools*

2.2.c Controlling and working with the timeline and media.

i. *Key Concepts: panning, zooming in to frame level, playing, pausing, keyboard shortcuts, timecodes, current time indicator (playhead), Work Area Bar, Preview Render indicator*

2.2.d Use markers.

i. *Key Concepts: composition (timeline) and layer (clip) markers, comp marker bin, keyboard shortcuts*

2.2.e Use guides and grids.

i. *Key Concepts: Title/Action Safe; Proportional Grid; adding, removing, locking, and unlocking guides; changing grid and guide color; hiding and showing grid and guides; using snap or align options; rulers*

3. Organizing Compositions

This objective covers layers, managing composition structure, and importing assets.

3.1 Import assets into a project.

3.1.a Import media from various sources.

i. *Key Concepts: compatible files, importing layers from Photoshop (.psd) and Illustrator (.ai) files, offline media, dragging and dropping, image sequences*

3.1.b Manage assets in an After Effects project.

i. *Key Concepts: finding, importing, replacing, relinking, reloading, interpreting, renaming, and deleting footage; organizing assets using folders; placeholders; metadata*

3.2 Manage layers.

3.2.a Identify and differentiate types of layers in the Timeline panel.

i. *Key Layer Types: footage, text, solid, shape, camera, adjustment, light, null object, audio, content-aware fill, and pre-comp*

3.2.b Use the Timeline panel to manage layers.

i. *Key Concepts: quality and sampling; adding, deleting, locking, unlocking, renaming, and reordering layers; managing labels; using switches and modes: shy, render order, motion blur, continuous rasterize, blending modes, track matte; mute and solo; synchronizing/aligning audio with visual effects*

3.2.c Adjust the visibility of a layer.

i. *Key Concepts: hiding and showing layers, opacity*

3.2.d Connect and combine layers by nesting, parenting, or linking.

i. Key Concepts: pre-composing and nesting, parenting, null objects

3.2.e Modify anchor points for animation.

i. Key Concepts: Pan Behind (Anchor Point) tool, adjusting anchor point coordinates

4. Creating and Modifying Visual Elements

This objective covers core tools and functionality of the application, as well as tools that affect the visual appearance of composition elements.

4.1 Use core tools and features to create content.

4.1.a Place and create visual elements.

i. Key Concepts: solids, shape layers, and shapes from vector layers, asset placement, temporal (timeline) position, spatial (coordinates) position, layer stacking order, Content-Aware Fill

ii. Key Tools: Shape, Pen (add, delete, and convert vertex points)

4.1.b Modify layers using opacity, track mattes, and masks.

i. Key Concepts: layer masks, track mattes, mask interpolation, copy and paste, path, expansion, feathering, adding, and subtracting

4.2 Create and manipulate text.

4.2.a Create text in a composition.

i. Key Concepts: point text, paragraph text, text on a path

ii. Key Tools and Panels: Type tool, Character panel, Paragraph panel, Properties panel

4.2.b Adjust character and paragraph settings.

i. Key Settings: font, Adobe Fonts, size, style, kerning, tracking, leading, horizontal and vertical scale, subscript and superscript, alignment, indentation (e.g. Indent left margin, etc.), paragraph spacing, and right-to-left text direction

4.2.c Create motion graphics templates.

i. Key Concepts: creating MOGRTs without expressions, supported properties in the Essential Graphics panel, name and export

4.3 Prepare footage for compositing and animation.

4.3.a Adjust layers in the Timeline.

i. Key Concepts: moving, sequencing, trimming, and splitting layers; setting In and Out points in the Footage panel

4.3.b Transform visual elements in the composition.

i. Key Terms: scaling, rotating, flipping, moving, fitting to, etc.

4.4 Manipulate layers, assets, and video.

4.4.a Use tracking and stabilizing methods and tools.

i. Key Tools: Tracker panel

ii. Key Concepts: stabilization, warp stabilizer, stabilize motion

4.4.b Change the speed of a layer.

i. Key Concepts: time remapping, time stretching, creating freeze frames. changing speed, time reverse

4.4.c Enable 3D space to modify composition elements.

i. Key Concepts: X, Y, and Z axes; two-dimensional objects in three-dimensional space; 2.5D techniques for depth between layers and X, Y, Z, rotation

ii. Key Tools: Select View Layout, Timeline panel, 3D Layer Switch (Enable 3D), cursor tools (3D Transform Gizmo)

4.5 Add and modify effects and presets.

4.5.a Apply and adjust an effect or preset to one or multiple layers.

i. Key Concepts: adding and adjusting video effect properties in the Effect Controls panel and timeline, adjustment layers

5. Animating Visual Elements

This objective covers animating visual elements using various techniques, including key frames, effects, expressions, masks, and Text Animators.

5.1 Apply keyframes for animation.

5.1.a Apply and modify keyframes.

i. Key Concepts: Keyframing transform properties (position, scale, rotation, opacity, anchor points); Linear, Bezier, and Hold keyframes; copying, pasting, and reversing keyframes

ii. Key Tools: Timeline panel, Properties panel, Transform controls, motion path, keyboard shortcuts, Auto-keyframing (Puppet tool, Wiggler panel, and Motion Sketch)

5.1.b Use keyframe interpolation for motion.

i. Key Concepts: Spatial and temporal interpolation, Easy Ease, Easy Ease In, Easy Ease Out

ii. Key Tools: Graph Editor (Speed Graph & Value Graph), Separate Dimensions, Constrain Proportions, Motion Blur

5.2 Animate using effects and visual techniques.

5.2.a Apply and animate effects using keyframes.

i. Key Concepts: Keyframing effect properties

ii. Key Panels: Effect Controls, Timeline, Properties, Effects & Presets

5.2.b Use expressions for animation.

i. Key Concepts: Wiggle, linking properties with Pick Whip, loop expressions for repeated motion

ii. Key Tools: Expression Editor, Expressions (wiggle and loop)

5.3 Animate using mask paths.

5.3.a Animate and modify masks.

i. Key Concepts: Keyframing mask paths, feathering, expansion, opacity animations, tracking masks

ii. Key Tools: Mask Path property, Mask Feather tool, Mask Expansion controls Animate track mattes. Key Concepts: Luma and Alpha mattes, inverting mattes

5.3.b Animate track mattes.

i. Key Concepts: Luma and Alpha mattes, inverting mattes

5.4 Animate text.

5.4.a Create and modify text animations.

i. Key Concepts: Text animation presets, animating text on a path

ii. Key Tools: Text Animators (position, fill color, tracking), Text Animator properties (Based On, Shape)

6. Publishing Digital Media

This objective covers saving and exporting compositions or specific assets in multiple formats.

6.1 Prepare a composition for publishing and archiving.

6.1.a Check a composition for errors and verify specifications.

i. *Key Concepts: hidden layers, animation timing, audio levels, resolution, title safe area, frame rate, work area, frame size*

6.1.b Archive a project.

i. *Key Concepts: Dependencies, find missing files, fonts, file names, file locations*

ii. *Key Tool: Collect Files*

6.2 Export media to various file formats.

6.2.a Export frames.

i. *Key Concepts: exporting one or multiple frames, file formats, file sequences, file names, export locations, layered Photoshop files*

6.2.b Export a composition.

i. *Key Concepts: file formats, video codecs, file locations, exporting for more than one target screen size or playback device, exporting in multiple formats, exporting using presets, exporting with an alpha channel*

ii. *Key Tools: Render Queue, Adobe Media Encoder*

NOTE: *All key items (Key Terms, Key Tools, Key Concepts, and Key Settings) are examples and not a comprehensivelist. Changes in the industry or application may necessitate coverage of items not listed that apply to the Target Candidate description for the Adobe Certified Professional program.*

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