



Visual Effects & Motion Graphics Using Adobe After Effects

Adobe Certified Associate is an industry-recognized credential that validates foundational digital media skills through live-in-the-application exams for Adobe Creative Cloud software.

Adobe has worked closely with education and industry experts to define the technical and domain knowledge necessary to use Creative Cloud apps in a professional context. This 50-minute exam reflects extensive research on entry-level skill expectations for visual effects and motion graphics. The target candidate has had approximately 150 hours of instruction and hands-on experience in Adobe After Effects. They are familiar with its core features and capabilities, as well as key industry concepts.

The objectives below are relevant across 2018, 2019, and 2020 versions of the exam.

Becoming an Adobe Certified Associate demonstrates mastery of the following skills:

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 the purpose, audience, and audience needs for preparing visual effects and motion graphics projects.

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

i. Key Terms: client goals, target audience, demographics, accessibility, etc.

1.2 Communicate with colleagues and clients about project plans.

1.2.a Demonstrate knowledge of techniques for communicating ideas about project plans with peers and clients.

i. Key Terms: Pre-production: shot list, script writing, storyboarding, design compositions or sketches, styleguides, etc.

1.2.b Demonstrate knowledge of basic project management concepts.

i. Key Terms: Delivering on time and to specification

1.3 Determine the type of copyright, permissions, and licensing required to use specific content.

1.3.a Identify legal and ethical considerations for using third-party content.

i. Key Concepts: copyright, permissions, licensing, etc.

ii. Key Terms: Creative Commons, public domain, intellectual property, derivative work, commercial use, attribution, work for hire, fair use/fair dealing, etc.

1.3.b Identify when and how to obtain permissions to use images or video of people and locations.

i. Key Terms: model release, location release, etc.

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

1.4 Demonstrate an understanding of key terminology and tools related to digital audio and video.

1.4.a Demonstrate knowledge of digital video terminology.

i. Key Terms: frame rate, aspect ratio, safe zone, image and video resolution, file formats, video

codecs, pixels, rendering, audio sampling rates, etc.

1.4.b Demonstrate knowledge of color management in digital video.

i. Key Terms: white balance, color grading, etc.

1.4.c Understand and use key terms related to video and audio post-production.

i. Key Terms: editing, transitions, audio levels, wave forms, etc.

1.5 Demonstrate knowledge of basic motion graphics, video effects (VFX), and design principles.

1.5.a Communicate visually using standard compositing techniques.

i. Key Terms: lighting, color, scale and perspective, working in 3D space, rotoscoping, etc.

1.5.b Identify general design principles and guidelines for motion graphics.

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, etc.

1.5.c Define common photographic/cinematic composition terms and principles.

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

1.5.d Demonstrate knowledge of common animation terms and principles.

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, etc.

2. Project Setup and Interface

This objective covers the interface setup and program settings that assist in an efficient and effective workflow, as well as knowledge about ingesting digital assets for a project.

2.1 Create and edit a project with the appropriate settings for video.

2.1.a Set appropriate project settings for video.

i. Key Concepts: project location on drive(s), folders with media assets, etc.

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

i. Key Concepts: frame rate, resolution, duration, dimensions, aspect ratio, presets, adjusting the work area, background color, naming compositions, etc.

2.2 Navigate, organize, and customize the application workspace.

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

i. Key Concepts: menus, toolbars, panels, navigating, and zooming, etc.

ii. Key Tools: Project panel, Timeline panel, Composition panel, Preview panel, Effects & Presets panel, Effect Controls panel, Layer panel, etc.

2.2.b Customize and manage workspaces.

i. Key Concepts: using/switching default workspaces; showing, hiding, nesting, and docking panels; using the Workspace Switcher, shortcuts, menus; customizing, saving, and resetting workspaces; etc.

2.2.c Configure application preferences.

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

2.3 Use non-visible design tools in the interface to aid in video workflow.

2.3.a Navigate a composition.

- i. *Key Concepts: panning, zooming, playing, pausing, keyboard shortcuts (spacebar, mouse wheel, etc.), time codes, current time indicators, etc.*

2.3.b Use markers.

- i. *Key Concepts: timeline and clip markers, etc.*

2.3.c Use guides and grids.

- i. *Key Concepts: title safe areas; action safe areas; adding, removing, locking, and unlocking guides; setting color; hiding and showing guides and grids; using snap or align options; etc.*

2.4 Import assets into a project.

2.4.a Import media from various sources.

- i. *Key Concepts: files, importing layers in .psd or .ai files, Adobe Dynamic Link, understanding that all files are linked, dragging and dropping, image sequences, etc.*

2.4.b Manage assets/footage in an After Effects project.

- i. *Key Concepts: relinking files, updating file locations for missing/moved/updated media, interpreting footage, organizing projects with folders, creating proxies, metadata, etc.*

3. Organizing Video Projects

This objective covers composition structure such as layers and managing composition structure for efficient workflow.

3.1 Use the Timeline panel.

3.1.a Use the Timeline panel to manage layers.

- i. *Key Concepts: quality and sample; adding, deleting, locking, unlocking, and renaming layers; reordering layers; managing labels; track switches and modes; etc.*

3.1.b Manage multiple layers in a complex composition.

- i. *Key Concepts: precomposing, parenting, null objects, render order, synchronizing audio with visual effects, etc.*

3.1.c Recognize the different types of layers in the Timeline panel.

- i. *Key Concepts: footage vs text vs shape layers, camera, adjustment, light, null object and precomposition, etc.*

3.2 Modify layer visibility using opacity, blending modes, and masks.

3.2.a Adjust a layer's visibility.

- i. *Key Concepts: hiding and showing layers; solo, shy, and mute layers; blending modes, opacity, etc.*

3.2.b Create, apply, and manipulate masks.

- i. *Key Concepts: layer masks, mattes, stencils, tools for creating masks, etc.*

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 document elements.

4.1 Use core tools and features to create compositions.

4.1.a Create shapes using a variety of tools.

- i. *Key Concepts: solids, shape layers, creating shapes from vector layers, etc.*
- ii. *Key Tools: shape tools, Pen tool, etc.*

4.1.b Place assets into a composition.

- i. *Key Concepts: composition frame position, stacking order, sorting layers, etc.*

4.2 Add, manipulate, and animate text.

4.2.a Create text in a composition.

- i. *Key Concepts: point text, paragraph text, path text, etc.*

- 4.2.b** Adjust character settings.
 - i. Key Settings: font, size, style, kerning, tracking, leading, horizontal and vertical scale, etc.*
- 4.2.c** Adjust paragraph settings.
 - i. Key Settings: alignment, line length, etc.*
- 4.2.d** Animate text.
 - i. Key Concepts: preset animations, custom animations, selectors, etc.*

4.3 Trim footage for use in compositions.

- 4.3.a** Trim layers using a variety of tools.
 - i. Key Concepts: moving, trimming, and splitting layers; setting In and Out points in the Footage panel; etc.*
- 4.3.b** Modify and refine layer trims using various methods.
 - i. Key Concepts: panning behind, adjusting trim, etc.*

4.4 Modify digital media within a project.

- 4.4.a** Transform visual elements in the composition.
 - i. Key Terms: scaling, rotating, flipping, moving, fitting to, etc.*
- 4.4.b** Change the speed or direction of a video clip.
 - i. Key Concepts: time remapping, time stretching, creating freeze frames. changing speed, changing direction, etc.*

4.5 Use basic reconstructing and editing techniques to manipulate digital audio and video.

- 4.5.a** Use basic auto-correction methods and tools.
 - i. Key Tools: stabilization, color grading, etc.*
- 4.5.b** Modify and edit vector graphics.
 - i. Key Tools: shape tools, vector editing tools, etc.*

4.6 Add and modify effects and presets.

- 4.6.a** Apply and adjust a video effect to a track.
 - i. Key Concepts: adding and adjusting video effect properties and keyframes in the Effect Controls panel, etc.*
- 4.6.b** Use 3D space to modify composition elements.
 - i. Key Concepts: X,Y, and Z axes; two-dimensional objects in three-dimensional spaces; cameras; lighting; animating camera vs animating objects; etc.*
- 4.6.c** Create image composites.
 - i. Key Concepts: keying (luma/chroma), opacity, masking effects, mattes, alpha channel, stencils, using 3D, motion tracking, etc.*
- 4.6.d** Manipulate and animate images using advanced tools.
 - i. Key Tools: Puppet tool, etc.*
- 4.6.e** Apply and modify effects on multiple layers.
 - i. Key Concepts: adjustment layers, etc.*

4.7 Create and modify keyframes for motion graphics.

- 4.7.a** Apply and adjust transformations using keyframes.
 - i. Key Concepts: adjusting layer settings over time; using keyframes to control scale, position, rotation, opacity and the anchor point; easing; motion paths; spatial and temporal interpolation; etc.*
 - ii. Key Tools: Graph Editor, etc.*
- 4.7.b** Animate effects using keyframes.
 - i. Key Concepts: adjusting effect settings over time by using keyframes, working in the Effects Controls panel and the Effects controls in the timeline, etc.*

5. Publishing Digital Media

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

5.1 Prepare a composition for publishing to web, screen, and other digital devices.

5.1.a Check a composition for errors and against specifications.

- i. Key Concepts: hidden layers, animation timing, audio levels, spelling, resolution, title safe area, project size, etc.*

5.2 Export digital video to various file formats.

5.2.a Save in the native file format for After Effects (.aep).

- i. Key Concepts: saving in multiple formats, file names, file locations, etc.*

5.2.b Export frames.

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

5.2.c Export a composition.

- i. Key Concepts: render queues, exporting to Premiere Pro, file formats, video codecs, file locations, exporting for more than one target screen size or playback device, exporting in multiple formats, etc.*

- ii. Key Tools: Adobe Media Encoder, etc.*

5.2.d Archive a project.

- i. Key Tool: Collect Files command*

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