

After Effects Hidden Shortcuts: The Productivity Handbook

A practical guide to lesser-known Adobe After Effects shortcuts and workflow hacks for motion designers.

1. Timeline Navigation

- J/K – Move to previous/next visible keyframe.
- I/O – Jump to layer In and Out points.
- U – Reveal animated properties.
- UU – Reveal modified properties.
- Shift + Page Up/Down – Move 10 frames at a time.

2. Layer Management

- Ctrl/Cmd + Shift + D – Split layer at playhead.
- Ctrl/Cmd +] or [– Move layer start/end to playhead.
- Ctrl/Cmd + Shift + C – Pre-compose quickly.
- Alt/Option + [or] – Trim layer edges.

3. Transform Shortcuts

- P Position, S Scale, R Rotation, T Opacity.
- A Anchor Point, U Animated properties.
- Shift + property shortcuts to reveal multiple properties.

4. Keyframe Tricks

- F9 – Easy Ease.
- Shift + F9 – Easy Ease In.
- Ctrl/Cmd + Alt/Option + K – Keyframe interpolation.
- Alt/Option-drag keyframes to scale timing.

5. Preview & Playback

- 0 on Numpad – RAM Preview.
- . on Numpad – Audio Preview.
- Caps Lock – Suspend viewer updates during heavy work.

6. Expression Efficiency

- Alt/Option-click stopwatch – Add expressions.
- Use pick whip to link properties rapidly.

7. Masking Shortcuts

- Q – Cycle mask tools.
- MM – Reveal mask properties.
- F – Reveal feather.

8. Graph Editor

- Shift-select keyframes for batch easing.
- Use Easy Ease then refine speed graphs.

9. Hidden Productivity

- Ctrl/Cmd + Alt/Option + Shift + Y – Solid settings.
- Ctrl/Cmd + Alt/Option + Shift + G – Fit to Comp.
- Use labels to organize complex comps.

10. Render Workflow

- Ctrl/Cmd + M – Add to Render Queue.
- Ctrl/Cmd + Alt/Option + M – Add to Adobe Media Encoder.

11. Professional Tips

- Create custom shortcuts for repetitive actions.
- Use scripts and presets to automate tasks.
- Save workspace layouts for different tasks.

12. Practice Exercises

- Animate a logo using only keyboard shortcuts.
- Rebuild a lower-third template efficiently.
- Time yourself to measure speed improvements.

Final Thoughts

Mastering shortcuts reduces repetitive actions and allows you to focus on creativity. Practice these hidden techniques daily to significantly improve your speed and confidence in Adobe After Effects.