

Read My Text! – After Effects Text Animators now in 3D

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Text in After Effects is a very complex, but very powerful beast. It can be used for simple, static titles or it can be prodded and tweaked into producing stunning motion graphics. The secret is understanding and mastering the Text Animator. In this session, you will discover how Text Animators really work, unlock their inner logic and explore new text animation possibilities by making individual characters in your text — or an entire phrase — move and rotate in 3D space.

Audience: Intermediate to Advanced Editors and Motion Graphics Artists.

When the 3D text option is selected, you can move, scale, and rotate each individual character. The properties that you can affect are: Anchor Point, Position, Rotation and Scale. Scale, anchor point and position will gain a 3rd value (z parameter) , which rotation will gain an x rotation and a y rotation (in addition to the z rotation. When the enable 3D characters in selected, you can now animate your text using any of these parameters.

Procedure

- Type text in a comp
- Expand the text player
- From the animate menu select Enable per-character 3D option
- From the animate menu choose Scale, Anchor Point, Position or Rotation
- An animator will appear on the Timeline
- Expand the Range Selector
- Adjust (or keyframe) properties of Start, End and/or Offset
- Adjust the value of the “new” position value that appears in the animator (not the Transform position)

You can also use some of the text animation presets that come included when you install After Effects.

Key

The key to master the text animator is to understand that the 'new' property (Scale, Anchor Point, Position or Rotation) that exists under the Animator position is different than the property that exists in the Transform properties. Whatever changes you make to the property will affect only the characters that exist between the start and the end lines. You can see these lines if you look in the Comp panel carefully. You can even adjust these lines right in the Comp panel by clicking and dragging.

Start animates the line on the left; End animates the line on the right. Offset animates both lines at the same time. You can add a second (or third or more) range selector so that you can select discontinuous characters.

All of these lines can be animated.

A couple of things to note:

A text layer itself automatically becomes a 3D layer when you enable 3D properties for its characters. A text layer will also become a 3D layer when you paste any property that exists only in the 3D environment. You will notice that the layer is 3D because the '3D enable' switch will be selected.

When you use the Per-character 3D option, then the rendering performance of your system will decrease.

To disable the Per-character 3D, deselect the '3D enable' switch in the Timeline.

Animate characters on a path with per-character 3D properties

- Create a new composition.
- Create a new text layer with the words 3D text.
- Create a path on the text layer.
- Text > Path Options > Path > Mask 1.
- Animate or change any of the text on a path properties to taste :
 - Reverse Path
 - Perpendicular to Path
 - Force Alignment
 - First Margin
 - Last Margin
- Choose Animation > Animate Text > Enable Per-character 3D.
- Choose Animation > Animate Text > Position, Rotation, Anchor Point or Scale.
- In the Timeline panel, in the Animator group, set the property and set the value.
- Expand Range Selector 1.

- Adjust the numbers for the End Property so that they affect only one character (do not keyframe, just adjust).
- Click the stopwatch icon for the Offset property to set an initial keyframe with the value at 0 seconds.
- Set the Offset property value to the negative number of whatever your End property value is: If the End property value is 15%, the you set Offset to -15%
- Move the CTI (current-time indicator) to a point in the future (3-4 seconds), and set the Offset value to 100%.
- Preview the composition.



Luisa Winters is an Adobe Certified Instructor in Macromedia Flash, After Effects, Photoshop, Premiere Pro, Encore DVD and Audition.

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