

Adobe After Effects 5.0

Creating a gradient wipe

Use the Gradient Wipe transition effect in Adobe® After Effects® to make certain parts of a layer appear before other parts. In this trailer for a horror movie, you'll use the Gradient Wipe effect to animate a red solid-color layer so that it looks like dripping blood.



1. In Photoshop, create a grayscale-mode gradient.

In Photoshop, create a grayscale-mode file containing a gradient that will control the Gradient Wipe transition for a separate solid red layer. You can create a simple gradient using Photoshop's Gradient palette and Gradient tool, or paint freeform gradient shapes using Photoshop's brush, airbrush, blur, or smudge tools.

The Gradient Wipe effect uses the luminance (brightness) values of each pixel in a gradient layer to control when pixels of another layer appear. Pixels corresponding to lighter areas appear first, then pixels corresponding to a darker areas appear. In this example, we painted light and dark areas so that the red layer would first reveal its pixels along thin streaks descending from the top (lighter pixels). As time progresses, we want the rest of the red layer to be revealed progressively from top to bottom (darker pixels), following the streaks that appeared earlier. Note that when the Gradient Wipe effect is halfway through its animation, After Effects displays any layer pixels that correspond to gradient pixels with lightness values from 100% to 50%, as indicated by the blue line below (The blue line is displayed for clarity only, and doesn't appear in the program).

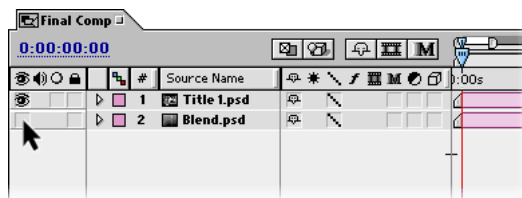
Tip: Another great way to create a freeform gradient is by using the Gradient Mesh tool in Adobe Illustrator.



2. Import the gradient into the project.

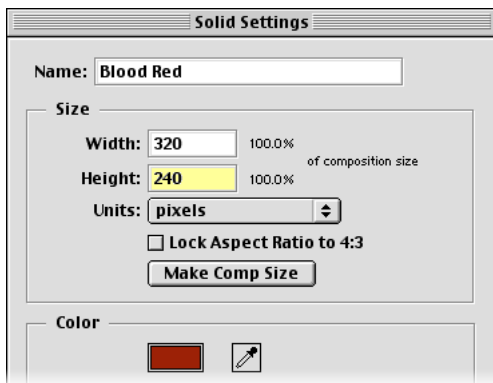
Import the gradient into After Effects. Choose File > Import > File. Select the gradient file, and press Enter (Windows) or Return (Mac OS). Drag the gradient file from the Project window to the Timeline window.

The gradient layer doesn't need to be visible for this effect; in most cases you don't want it to be visible at all. In this example, when we dragged the layer from the Project window, we moved it to the bottom of the Timeline hierarchy. You can hide the gradient layer completely by clicking the layer's Video switch in the Timeline window.



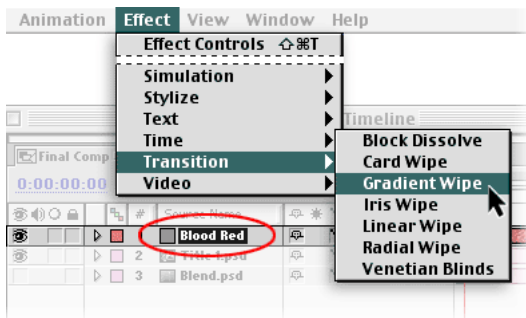
3. Create the solid red layer.

Choose Layer > New > Solid. Type a name for the layer and click Make Comp Size to make the solid's size match that of the composition. Click the color swatch, set a blood-red color, and click OK. Click OK again to close the Solid Settings dialog box.



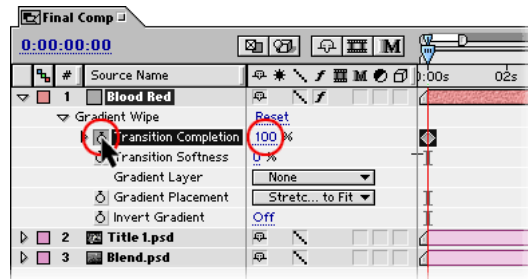
4. Apply the Gradient Wipe effect.

With the solid layer selected in the Timeline window, choose Effect > Transition > Gradient Wipe. You won't see any visible change until you adjust the effect's settings in the next step.



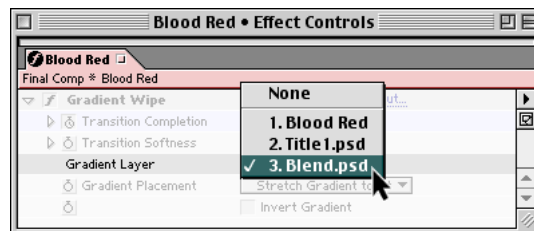
5. Start animating the Gradient Wipe effect.

With the solid layer selected in the Timeline window, press the E key to display the Effect properties, and display the Gradient Wipe effect properties. Move the current-time marker to the time when you want the transition to begin, and then click the stopwatch icon next to the Transition Complete option name to create a keyframe. Set the keyframe's value to 100.



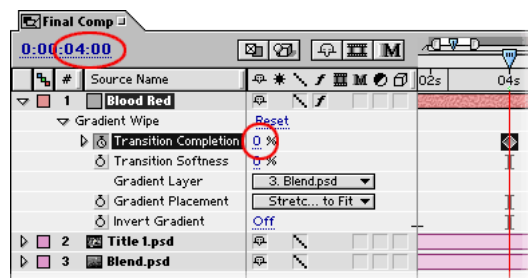
6. Assign the gradient layer to the solid layer.

In the Gradient Wipe effect in the Effect Controls window, choose the layer containing the gradient from the Gradient Layer menu.



7. Finish animating the Gradient Wipe effect.

Move the current-time marker to the time when you want the transition to end, and change the Transition Complete value to 0.



8. Preview the completed Gradient Wipe effect.

Set the time to the beginning of the transition, and then preview the effect using the Jog control at the bottom of the Time Controls palette. Watch the red layer as it progressively appears, following the luminance values on the gradient layer.

