



Basic Object Animation

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In this lesson, we're going to take a look at object-based animation. This will be a basic introduction to the topic. In future lessons, we'll go into much more in-depth projects.

We'll start with a brand new document. In Photoshop, we'll click on the File menu and choose New. The New Document dialog will appear and we'll choose the "Art & Illustration" preset category from the top of the dialog. Here, we'll choose the 1080p preset and we'll click the Create button. The new document will open in Photoshop.

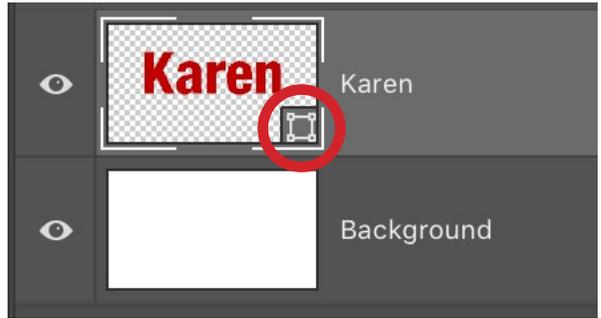
With this example, we want to have some text animate by moving into the frame. Before creating the text, we'll click on the foreground color swatch (at the bottom of the Toolbar) and we'll select a color for the text. In the video example, we used the Color Picker to choose a bright red color. When we add text, it will automatically use the foreground color.

We'll activate the Text Tool and click within the document to add some text. Placeholder text will appear and it will be highlighted so that we can replace it with our own text. In the video example, we typed in "Karen." At this point, you could resize the text, choose a different font, etc.



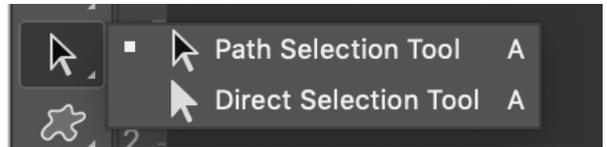
A text layer was added and is being repositioned and resized to fit the middle of the document.

For this animation, I'd like the individual letters to move independently of one another. Right now, all of the letters are in one single text layer, so we'll need to do something to get them on separate layers. With the type layer active, we'll click on the Type menu and choose "Convert to Shape." This will turn the layer into a Shape layer, and you can see the little shape icon in the corner of the layer thumbnail in the Layers Panel. Note: Now that the layer is a Shape layer, we will no longer be able to edit the text.



The text layer was converted into a Shape layer.

If we activate the Path Selection Tool (the icon looks like a black arrow), then we can click on the individual letters to make them active. We need to get each letter on its own layer, so we'll use this Path Selection Tool to click on the first letter (K) to make it active. Then, we'll click on the Layer menu and choose New > Shape Layer Via Cut. Alternatively, we could use the keyboard shortcut Shift+Command+J (Shift+Ctrl+J on Win). This will remove the letter from the layer it's currently on and it will place it onto a new layer.



The Path Selection Tool can be used to move various parts of a Shape layer.

We'll then click back on the original text layer and use the Path Selection Tool to click on the next letter (a). We'll again cut this letter onto its own layer by typing Shift+Command+J (Shift+Ctrl+J on Win). We'll follow the same process until each letter is on its own layer.



Every letter is now on a separate layer.

Add a Style to the Letters (Timestamp 5:18)

The next thing we're going to do is add a drop shadow to the letters. We'll activate the layer containing the first letter (K), we'll click on the FX icon at the bottom of the Layers Panel and we'll choose "Drop Shadow" from the pop-up menu. The Layer Styles dialog will appear and the drop shadow settings will be at the forefront. The Size slider will control how soft the edge is and the Distance slider will control how far the shadow appears to separate from the text. You can also click and drag within the image to manually position the shadow. The Opacity slider can be used to determine how dark the shadow will be. We'll adjust these settings so that the letter looks like it's nicely grounded by the shadow. We'll click OK to close the Layer Style dialog.

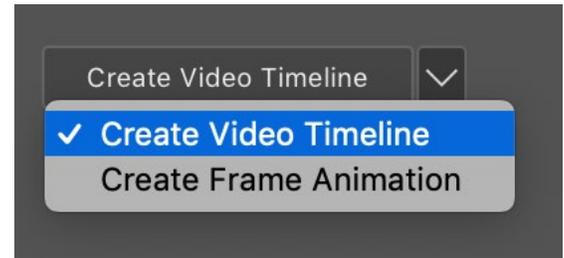
Now we need to copy this style to the other letters and there are several ways of doing this. One method is to hold down the Option key (Alt on Win) while clicking on the word "Effects" under the layer thumbnail and then drag the style to another layer. It's important that the Option key is held down. If we just clicked and dragged the style, it would remove it from one layer and apply it to another. We'll do this for all of the letters.



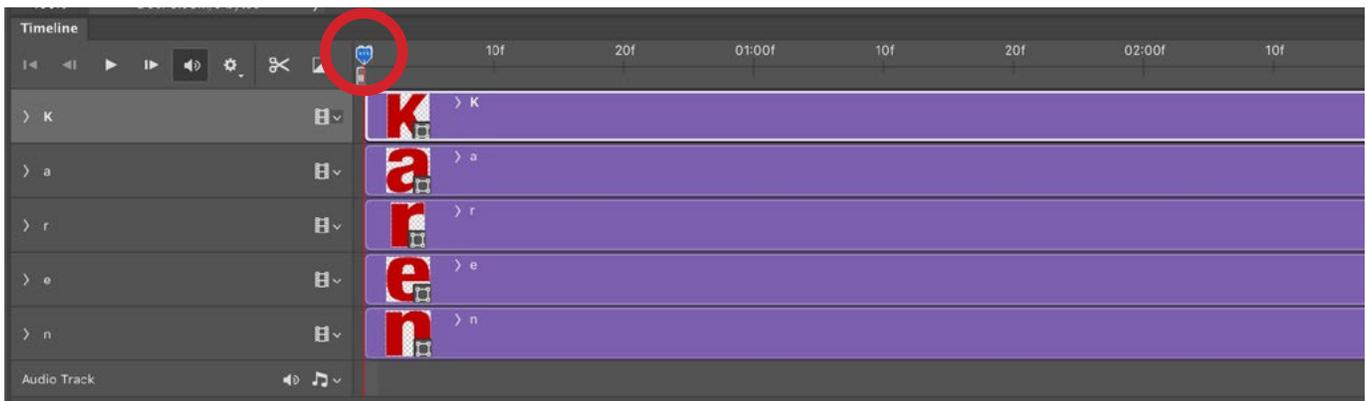
A drop shadow is being added to the K layer, making it look as if the K is hovering just above the surface.

Animating the Letters (6:39)

Now we can start thinking about animation. The Timeline panel will need to be visible on the screen, so we'll click on the Window menu and choose Timeline. It will appear along the bottom of the interface. There are two different types of animations that we could make: Video Timeline and Frame Animation. This option will appear in the center of the Timeline panel. We'll click on the little down-pointing arrow and choose "Create Video Timeline." Each of the layers in the Layers Panel will now appear in the Timeline panel. In the video example, we renamed the layers to make it easier to tell which letter we're working on. The scrubber bar at the top of the Timeline is the playhead that represents the time you're currently working on.



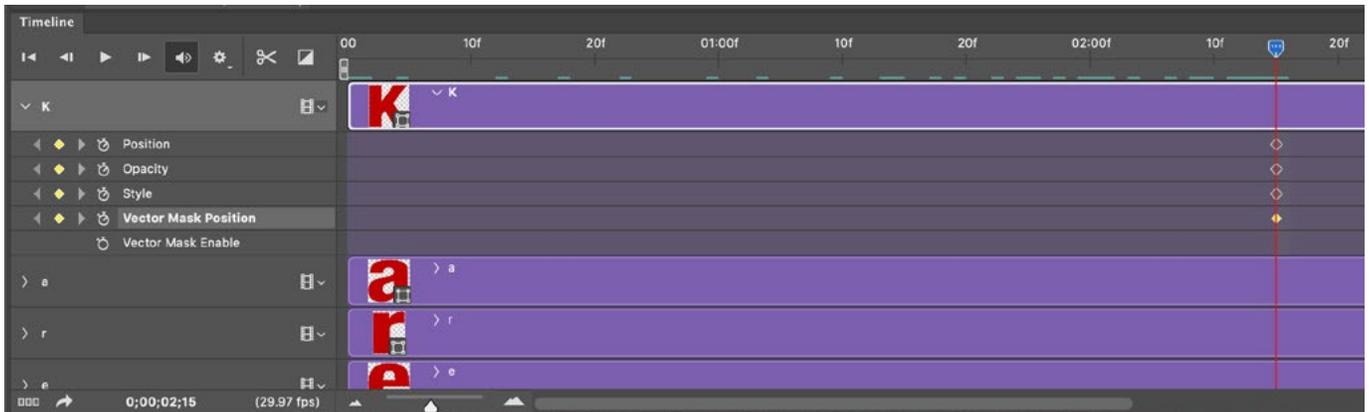
We're choosing to create a Video Timeline.



After choosing to create a Video Timeline, each layer will appear in the Timeline panel. The playhead scrubber (circled) determines what point in time we're working on.

The current position of the letters is how I'd like the document to look at the END of the animation. We need to specify that. We'll move the playhead scrubber to about the 2.5-second position, which is how long we'd like the animation to be. Then, we'll click on the little down-pointing arrow to the left of the first layer name (K). This will expand a list that includes the various elements that the animation

can keep track of. Click on the little clock icon to tell Photoshop that it should keep track of that particular element. We'll click on this little icon for Position, Opacity and Style. We want the animation to keep track of all these things. Also, because we're working with a Shape layer, we will need to click on the icon for "Vector Mask Position." Now, we will do the same thing for all of the other letter layers. When we click on these various elements, little diamonds will appear in the Timeline, indicating that something was recorded.



We specified that the animation should keep track of the Position, Opacity, Style and Vector Mask Position of this top layer.

Now, we need to define what the image should look like at the beginning of the animation so we'll drag the playhead scrubber back to the very beginning of the Timeline. Anything we do to the image now will specify what it should look like at the beginning of the animation. In order to see more of the image, we'll double-click on the Timeline tab to collapse the panel down so that it's not covering up the document window.

We'll click on the K layer in the Layers Panel and we'll double-click on the Drop Shadow effect that is listed below the layer thumbnail. This will cause the Drop Shadow settings to appear again and we'll use them to make it look as if the letter is hovering much farther above the document surface. We'll set the Opacity much lower, the Distance much farther and the Size much larger. Then we'll click OK to close the Layer Style dialog.



We moved the playhead to the beginning of the timeline and we're now changing the drop shadow style to make it look as if the letters are hovering far above the surface.

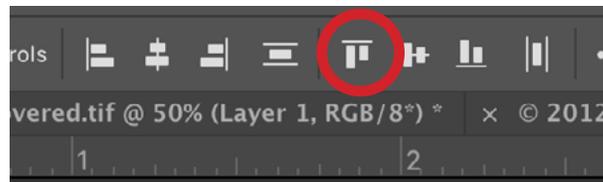
We now need to copy this style to all the other layers as well. Another way of doing that is to right-click on the layer in the Layers Panel and choose “Copy Layer Style” from the pop-up menu. Then, we'll select all of the other layers, right-click on one of them and choose “Paste Layer Style” from the pop-up menu.

Now we've got the letters to look like they're floating, and we'll also need to reposition them to the place they should start moving from in the beginning of the animation. They're going to start from outside the edges of the document, so they're not even visible. We'll move the K layer outside of the top left corner of the document. We'll move the n layer outside of the top right corner of the document. We'll move the middle layer (r) so that it's outside of the top center of the document, etc. Basically, all of the letters will look like they are lowering down from above the document window.



The letters are being positioned outside the top of the document frame.

Even though we can no longer see the letters, we can ensure that all layers are the same height by selecting all of the layers in the Layers Panel and then clicking on the Align Top Edges icon in the Options Bar above the image window.



When the Move Tool is active, click this icon to align the top edges of the selected layers.

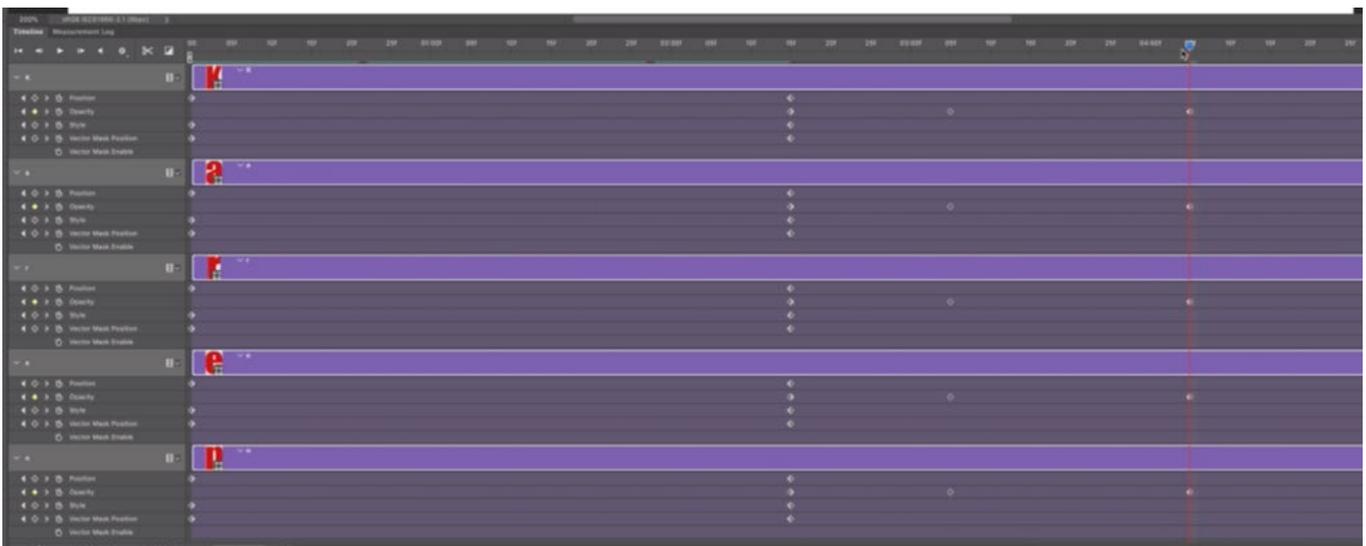
We'll now return to the Timeline. If we expand each layer to see the various elements we're keeping track of, you can see that a little diamond was placed on the timeline, indicating that a change was recorded. We can click and drag the playhead across the timeline and we can see the animation that was created. The letters start outside of the document and as we move the playhead to the right, the letters lower down and the shadows become harder and darker.



We're dragging the playhead across the Timeline to view the animation.

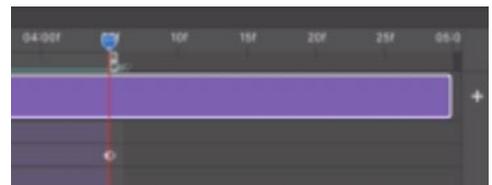
After the letters reach their end position, I'd like them to stay in place for a short time and then fade away. We'll move the playhead to the right a bit (by about a second or two). Then, we'll select all of the layers in the Layers Panel. We'll move the Opacity slider down and then move it back up to 100% again. This obviously makes no change, but the Timeline THINKS that we made a change and it therefore records the opacity of the layers at 100%.

Next, we'll move the playhead to the right again, by another two seconds or so. We'll make sure all the layers are selected and we'll set the Opacity slider to zero. This means that all layers will be invisible at this end stage of the animation. We can now move the playhead to the beginning of the Timeline and then slowly drag it to the right, viewing our animation.



We added two changes to the layers' opacity, marking the first point in time at 100% opacity and the final part of the animation at 0% opacity.

After the letters fade out, we don't want the animation to continue. We can specify where the animation should end by dragging the little slider that appears on the top right of the timeline. We'll position this slider at the end of the fadeout in our animation.



We can specify the end time of the animation by dragging the circled slider to the point where we'd like it to end.

We can play the animation by positioning the playhead at the beginning of the timeline and then clicking the Play button in the top left part of the Timeline panel.

Saving the Animation (19:12)

To save out the animation, we'll click on the File menu and choose Export > Render Video. If you wanted the animation to loop over and over again, you could instead choose the Save for Web option and then save the animation as a GIF file.