Premiere Pro Basics

An Overview of Premiere Pro

Premiere Pro is a professional program designed for video editing. Its capabilities and potential have expanded with each new version, although the program looked and worked much the same way. Premiere Pro is the first version of the Premiere program to veer dramatically from its original interface. For old-timers, it may take some getting used to, but the new interface is efficient and cohesive.

How do you use Premiere Pro?

Now there's a loaded question, and one that takes the remainder of this book to answer. If you are reading this, you no doubt have an interest in motion graphics. Premiere Pro is an editing program. Therefore, you wouldn't use it to design all parts of a flashy sports program opener. You would use it to assemble, edit, and enhance material from a range of other sources to make the final product.

Some types of source material are best prepared in Premiere Pro, such as video footage. You can work with your audio source materials within Premiere Pro or use an external audio-editing program.

Other types of material commonly used come from illustration or image-editing programs, such as Illustrator or Photoshop. You can format images in an external editor before bringing them into Premiere Pro, or you can use effects in Premiere Pro for image manipulation, such as color balancing or levels.

Graphical animations, such as animated circles, lines, logos, and so on are another element commonly used in visual media. The decision to build these animations in Premiere Pro or to use another program depends on the complexity, time available, and software available. Until Premiere Pro arrived, animations were done in a separate window in Premiere. Although you could essentially animate anything, the process was complex, time consuming, and often better left for a dedicated motion graphics program such as Adobe After Effects. You can create some very sophisticated animation in Premiere Pro, with much less time and effort than previously, as you will learn in the book.

Working with Premiere Pro

As I mentioned, Premiere Pro is an editing program. It uses time lines to organize and control the content of your movies. You add media such as video and audio to the tracks in the Timeline and then edit the material for length, content, and so on. But that's only the beginning. After the basic movie is assembled, you can add titles; transparencies and superimposed tracks; animation; and effects, split screens, and track mattes—the opportunities are almost endless.

After your movie is completed, you have to decide how you want to distribute it. You choose project settings as you start a project, but you can choose different settings for exporting. This feature gives you an enormous amount of freedom.

Suppose that I am hired to design media for a furniture manufacturer. I have to consider what kinds of products the company needs. In all likelihood, the manufacturer wants to use a variety of products that may include consumer or trade show promotions, a training video, material for prospective investors, and online materials. Using Premiere Pro, I can design and export all these different types of material. The projects can be output from Premiere Pro in whatever formats are required, ranging from CD or video formats to DVD and online media such as Windows Media. All these products are created from the same source material. This ability is the power of Premiere Pro.

How far you can go?

Premiere Pro is an advanced piece of software. This course is designed at the introductory to intermediate level. As a result, some features are not explored in the book due either to their level of complexity or to the technical issues involved. For example, one of Premiere Pro's strong features is its ability to capture digital video and audio. However, because incorporating video that you capture into a book-based project is practically impossible, digital video isn't covered.

Another strength of the program in this version is its audio-editing capabilities. Because audio can be used is so many different ways and also can be extended based on your computer's capabilities (using surround sound, for example), the course covers basic audio editing and audio effects.

Premiere Pro can be highly customized based on the way you like to work. You can work predominantly with the mouse or with shortcut keys. You can also define your own set of keyboard shortcuts for many functions. You learn where to do those tasks, but for the most part the project is based on general settings and uses standard mouse and key functions.

Treat what you learn in this course as a starting point. Whether your interests are in HDTV or Web video, there is a great deal to learn beyond what you learn here. The important thing to remember is that this course gives you a good overview of the program, introduces you to editing concepts, and helps you design a workflow that can be used regardless of your area of interest.

New features in Premiere Pro

Premiere has changed considerably over the years. Version 6.0 had some interesting new features, including digital video support, a Storyboard function to lay out a project before adding it to the Timeline, enhanced editing capabilities, and an Audio Mixer for real-time audio editing. Version 6.5 expanded those features and added real-time previews and a snazzy new title editor. Premiere Pro takes the software to an entirely new level. Unlike earlier versions of Premiere, Premiere Pro works only on Windows XP to take advantage of its architecture—no Mac version of Premiere Pro is available.

Motion and animation

Version 6.0 introduced the Effect Controls window, and that window is much expanded in Premiere Pro. The new Effect Controls window allows you to set keyframes for individual parameters of the effects that you apply to your clips. Not

only can you control effects more easily, but the same Effect Controls window is used to create motion paths and animations using more precise controls than those available in the Motion window in earlier versions of Premiere. Premiere Pro also has hundreds of video and audio effects.

Multiple time lines

You can create and use multiple time lines, known as sequences. Use multiple sequences to create complex layered and repeating effects or to organize large projects into segments.

Real-time viewing

Premiere Pro uses real-time viewing for all aspects of a project. See your edits, effects, titles, color correction, and animation in real-time as you are working. This means as you work on a project, you can see the effects immediately and you don't have to wait to produce a preview.

Expanded audio tools

The audio tools were enhanced in Versions 6.0 and 6.5, and they take a leap forward in Premiere Pro. You can record audio, such as a voiceover track, directly to the Timeline. You can create audio in surround sound for your projects. The Audio Mixer now includes options to apply effects to an entire track and to submix tracks. Premiere Pro supports the VST plug-in architecture, which is an industry standard for audio filters.

Color management

Premiere Pro uses a wide range of tools and processes for modifying and managing color. The color correction tools can be used to precisely adjust hue, saturation, and lightness, or even replace one color with another throughout a clip. Premiere Pro includes waveforms and vectorscopes to monitor your clips for legal color compliance if you are creating broadcast video.

An expanded range of export options

Premiere Pro has more export options than any previous version. You can export Adobe Premiere Pro projects directly to DVD for distribution. Create output in DV, DVD, CD, VCD, SVCD, Web, and broadcast formats.

These changes are very good ones. I have worked with Premiere since Version 2, and my skill and enthusiasm have evolved along with the program. Premiere Pro is a new and better way to work with video.

Integration into Adobe's digital video suite

Premiere Pro is the cornerstone of Adobe's digital video suite. You can perform a wide range of activities in Premiere Pro, as you will learn, and can expand the scope of your work with the other products in the suite. Design animations in Premiere Pro, or use After Effects to develop complex motion graphics. Work with audio in Premiere Pro or use the new Adobe Audition for complex audio development. You can export DVD-formatted material directly from Premiere Pro, or use the new Adobe Encore program for designing interactive DVDs.

System Requirements

The first step begins before you even install Premiere Pro. Many programs put your computer's capabilities to the test, and Premiere Pro is certainly one of them. Make sure that your computer meets the *required* hardware and software capabilities—and preferably the recommended capabilities. Nothing is as frustrating as waiting and waiting and waiting for your computer to catch up to you. I have long viewed an underpowered computer as an enormous inspiration killer. After all, how do you sustain your enthusiasm and artistic vision when you have to wait to see it? By the time the machine catches up to you, you have forgotten what you wanted to do!

Your system should meet the requirements as listed here to properly run with Premiere Pro.

» Intel Pentium III 800MHz processor (Pentium 4 3.06GHz recommended)

» Microsoft® Windows® XP Professional or Home Edition with Service Pack 1

» 256MB of RAM installed (1GB or more recommended)

» 800MB of available hard-disk space for installation

» CD-ROM drive

» Compatible DVD recorder (DVD-R/RW+R/RW) required for Export to DVD

» 1024x768 32-bit color video display adapter (1280x1024 or dual monitors recommended)

» Optional: ASIO audio hardware device; surround speaker system for 5.1 audio playback

You don't need digital video capture capabilities to do the project in this book.

» OHCI-compatible IEEE 1394 interface

» Dedicated 7200RPM UDMA 66 IDE or SCSI hard drive or disk array