

Chapter 1

Feeling at Home with Adobe Premiere Elements

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-

A few years ago, video editing was only practical for people with a lot of fancy editing equipment and piles of cash. But a revolution has been happening for a few years now, a revolution that is putting the moviemaking art within reach of almost anyone. The revolution has occurred in three phases:

1. The creation of mega-powerful computers with huge hard drives that are unbelievably affordable has changed the rules of video editing. Such computers incorporate technologies like IEEE-1394 FireWire, which make working with video easy.
2. The advent of affordable digital camcorders has made collecting high-quality video a snap. These camcorders interface easily with computers.
3. The clincher is software. High-end video editing programs like Adobe Premiere Pro and Apple Final Cut Pro brought pro-caliber video editing to desktop computers, and simpler programs like Apple iMovie and Pinnacle Studio made editing software affordable.

I hesitate to call Adobe Premiere Elements the next step in the video editing revolution, but it's definitely a step forward. Premiere Elements delivers about 90 percent of the video-editing power of high-end programs like Final Cut Pro for an astoundingly low retail price of just \$100. I cannot think of another program that costs less than \$300 and offers anywhere near the level of features of Premiere Elements.

This chapter introduces you to Adobe Premiere Elements by showing you what this program is designed to do and what it has to offer. You also get a tour of Premiere Elements to help you find your way around this feature-packed program; I even guide you through your first movie project in Premiere Elements.

What Is Adobe Premiere Elements?

You already know that Adobe Premiere Elements is a video-editing program. But what does that mean? It means that using Adobe Premiere Elements, you can quickly take video from your digital camcorder, delete and rearrange scenes, add some special effects and credits, and within minutes export your movie to a DVD or the Internet. Just a few years ago all of this required equipment and software that costs thousands — if not tens, or even hundreds, of thousands — of dollars.

You can find lots of video-editing programs on the market, even at the \$100 price point of Adobe Premiere Elements. But several important features set Premiere Elements apart from the others:

- ✔ Make use of up to 99 separate video tracks that can be composited and combined to make a single image.
- ✔ Add and edit audio soundtracks to your program. Up to 99 separate audio tracks can be added to the program.
- ✔ Add animated elements. For example, you can create advanced, professional-style titles and add still graphics to your movie projects. Then you can animate these titles and graphics in a variety of ways.
- ✔ Apply one of over 70 different transitions to video. Transitions can be used in any video track.
- ✔ Modify your movie with over 70 video and more than a dozen audio effects.
- ✔ Fine-tune color and lighting in your video images and improve audio quality.
- ✔ Preview edits immediately, in real time, without having to render effects first.
- ✔ Record movies to videotape at full broadcast quality.
- ✔ Export tightly compressed movies for the Web in QuickTime or Windows Media formats.
- ✔ Output movies directly to DVD and easily create DVD navigation menus.
- ✔ Integrate Premiere Elements with Adobe Photoshop Elements to quickly burn your still-image collections onto slideshow DVDs.

Even these hefty capabilities are only a smattering of what you can do with Adobe Premiere Elements. It's one of the most versatile programs you'll ever use.

Where's the Mac?

Older versions of Adobe Premiere (version 6.5 and earlier) were available for both Macintosh and Windows computers. Adobe's announcement that Premiere Pro (technically Version 7 of Premiere) would run only in Windows XP was met with some shock and surprise, especially considering that only a few years ago, Adobe was considered a very Mac-oriented software company. Adobe Premiere Elements is based heavily on Premiere Pro, so like the Pro version, Premiere Elements only runs on computers using Windows XP. And by the way, Adobe really means it when it says that Windows XP is required. Premiere Elements will not run on older versions of the Windows operating system such as Windows 2000 or Windows Me.

If you have a Macintosh, you might be considering running Premiere Elements on your Mac using a program that emulates the Windows operating system. I do not recommend this workaround: As I describe in Chapter 2, Premiere Elements relies heavily on a technology called *SSE* — a set of multimedia instructions only found in the latest computer processor chips from AMD and Intel. If those exact instructions are not present, Premiere Elements will crash hard and crash often — and as of this writing, no Apple processors include the SSE instruction set. If you use a Macintosh and are looking for a powerful yet somewhat affordable video-editing program, consider Apple's Final Cut Express, which retails for about \$300.

Taking the Grand Tour

Adobe developed Premiere Elements on the foundations of Premiere Pro, and one of their primary design goals was to make Premiere Elements much easier to use, especially if you don't have any prior experience with video-editing programs. Still, even though the user interface has been simplified, I would not call Premiere Elements a “dumbed down” version of Premiere Pro. Little has been left out — you are probably going to have more options than you even need. And the quality of the tools is great; the basic aspects of a high-quality video editing program are all there. In short, I think that video newbies and veterans alike will feel right at home using Premiere Elements.

Launching Premiere Elements for the first time

To launch Premiere Elements, click the Start button to open the Start menu and choose All Programs → Adobe Premiere Elements. For more information on using Windows XP, see “Commanding the Interface,” later in this chapter. When you first launch Premiere Elements, you see a welcome screen that looks like Figure 1-1. The area under Recent Projects gives you quick access to any projects you've been working on recently. (If this is the first time you've launched Premiere Elements, you probably won't have anything listed under Recent Projects.)



Figure 1-1:
Adobe
Premiere
Elements
welcomes
you with this
screen.

If you don't have a previous project to open and continue work on, you have to start a new project if you want to see Premiere Elements in action. Click the New Project button in the welcome screen. A dialog box like the one shown in Figure 1-2 appears. Enter a name for your project — the exact name isn't important for now — and click OK.

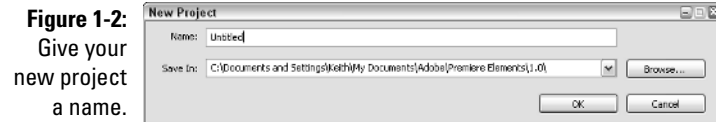


Figure 1-2:
Give your
new project
a name.

When you give your project a name, Premiere Elements opens (at last) to the editing workspace.



The exact appearance of your workspace depends upon the current screen resolution setting on your computer, but the basic appearance should resemble Figure 1-3.

Although the *exact* appearance varies, you still see at least the four fundamental windows that make up the Premiere Elements interface — the Media window, the Monitor, the Timeline, and the How To window, as shown in Figure 1-3. These windows are explained in greater detail in the following sections.

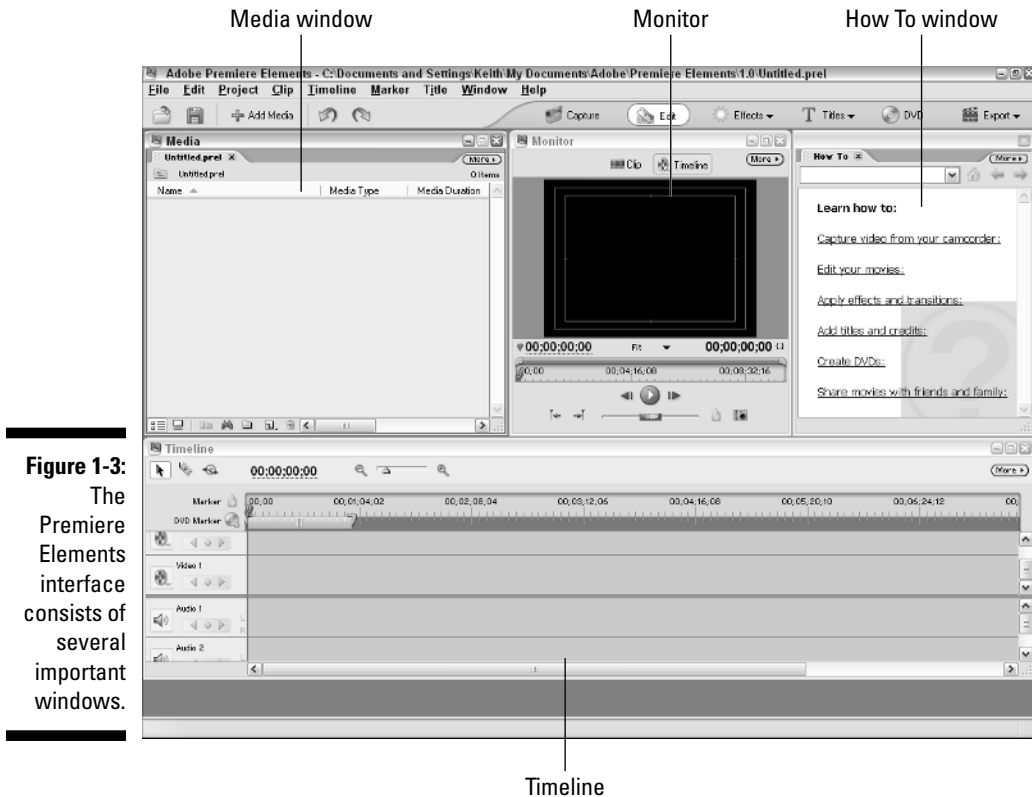


Figure 1-3:
The
Premiere
Elements
interface
consists of
several
important
windows.

Getting to know the Media window

Think of the Media window as a sort of filing cabinet that helps you organize the various video clips, audio clips, and other pieces of media that you use in your project. Whenever you capture video from your camcorder, import still graphics, or capture audio from an audio CD, the files show up in the Media window. If you're working on a big project, you'll end up with many different files in this window; a full Media window looks similar to Figure 1-4. You can create new folders in the Media window to help organize your files. Folders in the Media window work just like folders in your operating system. To create a new folder, follow these steps:

- 1. Click in the Media window to select it and make it active.**
- 2. From the menu bar at the top of the Premiere Elements screen, choose File⇨New⇨Folder.**

A new folder appears in the Media window with the name highlighted.

- 3. Type a name for your new folder and press Enter.**

Your new folder now appears in the Media window. Click the folder to view its contents. To add items to a folder, simply click-and-drag them into the folder from elsewhere in the Media window. Figure 1-4 shows a Media window for a project I'm working on; as you can see, I've imported and captured a lot of files into it.

Although the Media window is primarily a storage place, you can also use it to

- **Review data about a file.** What's the frame size of the image? Is the file an audio clip, video, or a still graphic? How long is the clip? Columns in the Media window provide a wealth of information about your files.
- **Preview the file.** The Media window has an optional preview area that you can display if you wish. Click the More button in the upper-right corner of the Media window and choose View → Preview Area from the menu that appears. The preview area appears, as shown in Figure 1-4. If you click a file in the Media window, a preview of it appears in the preview area. If you click the little Play button next to the preview, you can play audio and video clips to get a better idea of what's in them.

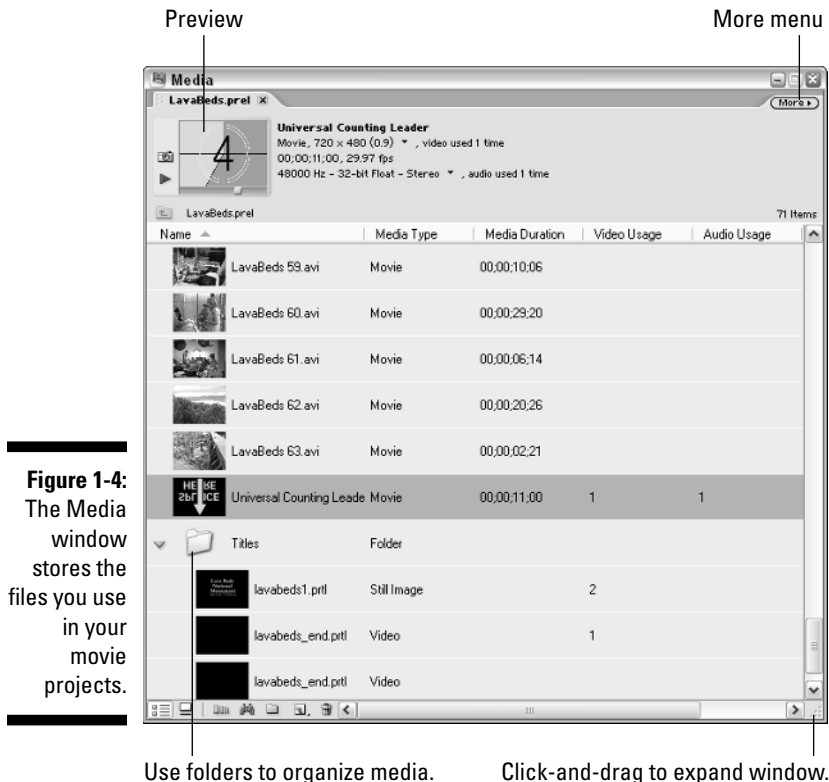


Figure 1-4: The Media window stores the files you use in your movie projects.

Reviewing the Monitor window

Try to imagine editing video without being able to look at it. Would it be possible? Perhaps. After all, Beethoven composed his epic Ninth Symphony while completely deaf. But most of us aren't Beethoven and we need to be able to directly experience our work. Thankfully, Premiere Elements makes sure you can always see exactly what your movie looks like as you work on it. The Monitor window is where you view your work. It has controls for playing video and audio clips and for performing other editing tasks.

In the Monitor, you can

- ✓ Play through clips you plan to add to a movie project. As you play each clip, you decide which portions to add to the movie by setting *In points* and *Out points*. When you set In and Out points, only the portions of the clip between those two points will be added to your movie program.
- ✓ Play through the edits you have already made in your project.

The Monitor has two modes:

- ✓ **Clip mode:** In Clip mode, shown in Figure 1-5, the Monitor window lets you preview clips before placing them in your project. If you double-click a clip in the Media window, it automatically opens in the Monitor in Clip mode.
- ✓ **Timeline mode:** In this mode, the Monitor shows you the contents of the Timeline, which is where you assemble your movies. To switch between Clip and Timeline modes, simply click the buttons labeled Clip and Timeline at the top of the Monitor window. I explain what the Timeline is in the next section.

Trying out the Timeline

The Timeline could be considered the heart and soul of Adobe Premiere Elements. As with virtually every other video-editing program, the Timeline in Premiere Elements is the tool that enables you to craft your movie by putting its pieces in the desired order. You assemble clips, add effects, composite multiple clips on top of each other, and add sound with this bad boy. As you can see in Figure 1-6, the Timeline shows audio tracks on the bottom and video tracks on top. You can have up to 99 video tracks and 99 audio tracks in the Premiere Elements Timeline.

I can't completely explain the Timeline here. That would fill a chapter all by itself. (In fact, it does — Chapter 8.) However, I do want you to know that by using the Timeline, you can

- ✓ Figure out where you are in the project by using the Timeline ruler.
- ✓ Use the CTI (Current Time Indicator) to set the current playback and editing location in the Timeline.



Figure 1-5: Preview and edit clips in the Monitor window.

- ✓ Control aspects of a clip directly. For example, you can adjust the timing of video effects or adjust audio levels. (See Chapter 12 for more on working with effects; Chapter 13 shows you how to work with audio.)
- ✓ Use the Zoom control to zoom your view of the Timeline in and out.

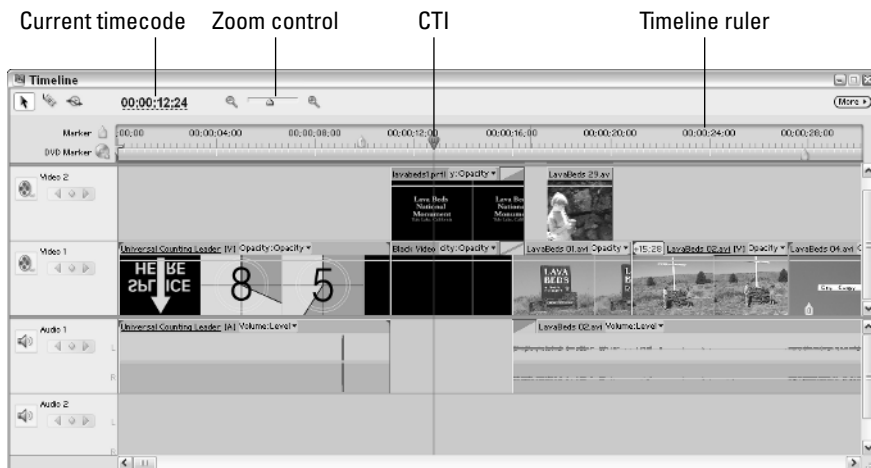


Figure 1-6: The Timeline is where your clips come together to make a movie.

- ✓ Move clips by simply dragging-and-dropping them to new locations in the Timeline. If your clip calls for some effects and transitions, you can add them by dragging them to the Timeline as well.

Saying howdy to the How To window

Admittedly, the Media window, the Monitor, and the Timeline are the three primary components of Adobe Premiere Elements. An introduction to Adobe Premiere can't stop there, though. A new feature in Premiere Elements is the How To window, which is shown in Figure 1-7. If you don't see the How To window, choose Window→How To. Adobe created the How To window as part of an effort to make Premiere Elements easier to use. The idea is that the How To can quickly provide help and tips on whatever it is you happen to be working on at any given time. Click blue links in the How To window to view help articles and tips.

The menu at the top of the How To window allows you to choose a general help category. In Figure 1-7 the How To window displays help tips on basic editing. If you're working on Titles or a DVD, for example, choose a different option from the menu. Or if you find that you get all the help you need from *Adobe Premiere Elements For Dummies*, and the How To is just a big waste of screen space, click the red X in the upper-right corner to hide the How To window.



Figure 1-7:
Need help?
Consult the
How To
window.

Meeting the Effects and Effect Controls windows

As you work on your movies you'll eventually get to the point at which you'll want to do more advanced editing. That means adding transitions and special effects. Adobe Premiere Elements stores all of its transitions and effects in the Effects window, which is shown in Figure 1-8. To view the Effects window,

choose Window⇨Effects. Effects and transitions are arranged into folders and subfolders. For example, if you want to create a transition that dissolves one clip into another (this one of my favorite effects), simply open the Video Transitions folder to reveal the Dissolve subfolder as well as other subfolders.

Just as important as applying transitions and effects is the ability to fine-tune and control those effects. Premiere Elements offers the Effect Controls window, shown in Figure 1-9, to help you control your effects. Choose Window⇨Effect Controls to open the Effect Controls window, and then click a clip in the Timeline to view the effect controls for that particular clip. I show you how to work with video transitions in Chapter 9. In Chapter 12, I show how to work with video effects and I describe audio effects and transitions in Chapter 13.

Figure 1-8: Premiere Elements stores all effects and transitions in subfolders like this.

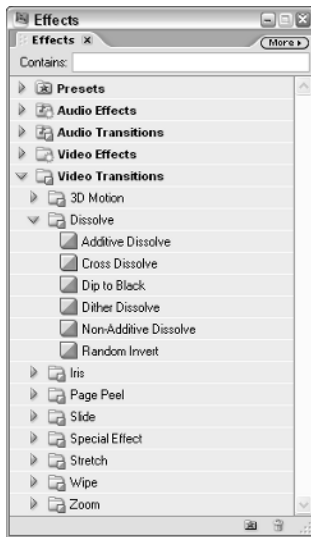
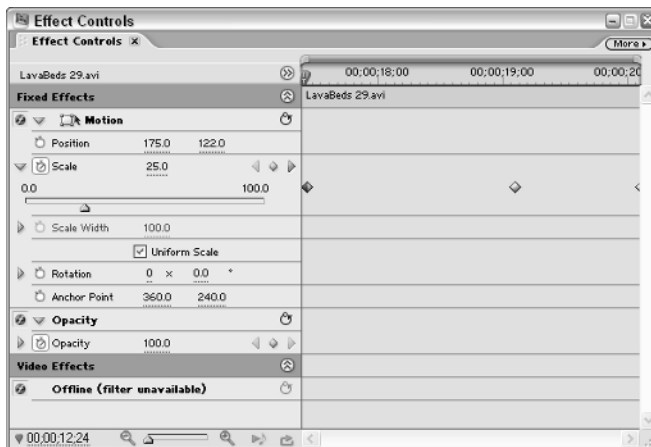


Figure 1-9: Fine-tune your effects here.



Understanding floating palettes

If you have ever used other Adobe programs like Photoshop or Illustrator, you're probably familiar with the small floating windows called *palettes*. Like most other Adobe creative programs, Premiere Elements stores some of its advanced features and effects in floating palettes. Premiere Elements offers just two palettes, the History palette, and the Info palette. The History palette (described in Chapter 7) shows a record of all the edits and changes you've made, and the Info palette displays detailed information about clips and other items in Premiere Elements. To view them, do this:

1. Choose **Window**⇨**History**.
2. Choose **Window**⇨**Info**.

Two floating palettes that look something like Figure 1-10 appear on-screen. You can move these palettes around by dragging the title bar, or close them by clicking the little Close (X) button in the upper-right corner. Use the Window menu to re-open the palettes. To resize a palette, click-and-drag an edge or corner of the palette.

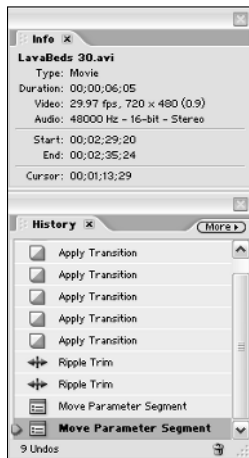


Figure 1-10: Premiere Elements stores some commands on floating palettes.

Commanding the Interface

As I mention in the “Foolish Assumptions” section of the Introduction, one of the assumptions I make about you is that you already know how to open and close programs on your computer. You probably also know how to open menus, click buttons, and even resize or minimize windows.

That said, Adobe Premiere Elements is so advanced (and video editing is so demanding of a computer's resources) that I suspect you've recently bought a new computer — and there's a good chance you've recently “switched camps” from Macintosh to your first Windows PC. To help ease your transition, I want to provide a brief overview of the basic Windows interface controls in Adobe Premiere Elements.



Adobe Premiere Elements requires Windows XP. Any edition — Home, Professional, or Media Center — of Windows XP will suffice. You can't run Premiere Elements in Windows 2000, Windows Me, or any previous version of Windows. If you're new to Windows XP and are feeling a bit discombobulated, I suggest you purchase a book with more detailed information on using and managing the system. I recommend *Windows XP For Dummies*, by Andy Rathbone (Wiley). For more advanced Windows XP tips, check out *50 Fast Windows XP Techniques by Yours Truly* (Wiley).

The fundamental look and feel of the Microsoft Windows interface has not changed significantly since Windows 95 was released in (ahem) 1995, although the cosmetics were modernized a bit with the release of Windows XP. Figure 1-11 shows a typical Premiere Elements screen.

To launch Premiere Elements, click the Start button to open the Start menu and choose All Programs⇨Adobe Premiere Elements. If you use Premiere Elements a lot, it will show up in the list of commonly used programs that appears when you first click Start.

Basic Windows XP controls include

- ✓ **Start menu:** Use this menu to access programs on your computer, as well as to shut down and restart controls. The Start menu is similar in concept to the Apple menu on a Macintosh.
- ✓ **Taskbar:** All currently open programs have a button on the Taskbar. Click a program's button on the Taskbar to open it. The Taskbar is similar in concept to the Mac OS X Dock.
- ✓ **System Tray:** Memory-resident programs like antivirus programs and other utilities often show an icon in the system tray. In Chapter 6, I show you how to prepare your computer for resource-intensive operations such as video capture, and part of that preparation includes temporarily disabling a lot of your system tray icons.
- ✓ **Minimize:** Click this button to minimize a window. When a program is minimized, it becomes a button on the Taskbar. Use this button like you would the Collapse or Minimize buttons on a Mac.
- ✓ **Restore/Maximize:** Use this button to change the window size. Restore/Maximize works like the Zoom button in the Mac OS.
- ✓ **Close:** Click this to close a program or window.

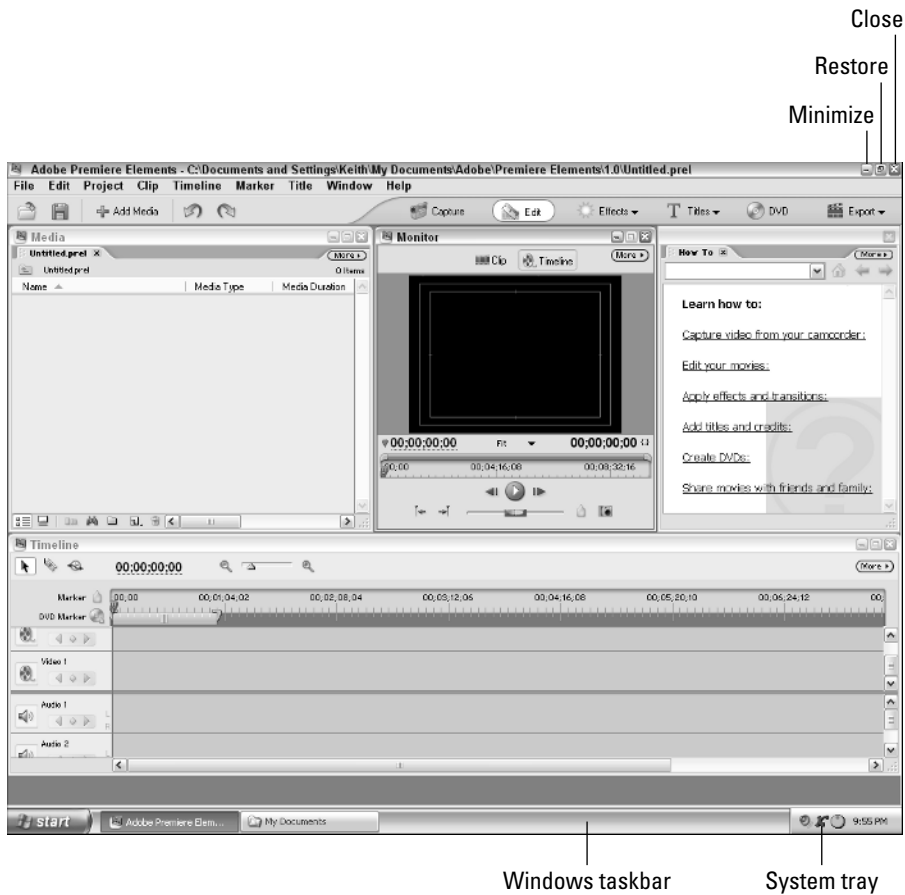


Figure 1-11:
If you're new to Windows XP, never fear. It's not *too* different.



If you don't like digging through the Start menu every time you want to launch Premiere, you can launch it from a desktop icon created by the Premiere Elements setup program. If you don't see a Premiere Elements desktop icon, right-click the Adobe Premiere Elements link in the Start menu and choose Send To→Desktop (create shortcut) from the menu that appears. Doing so creates a desktop icon that you can double-click to launch Premiere Elements.

Making Your First Movie

Sometimes the best way to get to know a program is to just dig in and get your hands dirty with it, actually putting its features to use as the designers intended. If you have a digital camcorder handy with some video already recorded on the tape, and you have installed Adobe Premiere Elements on your computer, you're ready to start making movies. The following sections

walk you through the basic steps of making a movie, and if you've never used Premiere Elements before or even edited a movie on your computer, the following sections should serve as a good introduction.

Starting your first project

Your first step in making a movie is perhaps the most obvious one. Launch Premiere Elements, and when the welcome screen appears (refer to Figure 1-1) click New Project. Enter a name for your project in the New Project dialog box — any old name will do, as long as it's something you will remember later — and click OK. Premiere Elements creates your project and opens to the basic Premiere Elements screen. Wasn't that easy?

Capturing video

After you've created a new project in Premiere Elements, you need some source footage to work with. For now I assume you have a digital camcorder and you've already recorded some video that you want to edit. The process of getting video from the camcorder into your computer is called *capturing*. To capture some video, follow these steps:

- 1. Connect your digital camcorder to your computer's FireWire (IEEE-1394) port.**

If you're not sure whether your computer has a FireWire port, or if you need to add one, see Chapter 2. Premiere Elements can only capture video from a digital camcorder connected to a FireWire port; if you have an older analog camcorder, you'll need to use special analog video capture hardware and probably some different video capture software. See Chapter 6 for more on capturing analog video. See Chapter 4 for information on the differences between digital video and analog video.

- 2. Turn the Camcorder on to VTR or Player mode.**

If Windows automatically opens a window stating that a digital video device was detected, click Cancel to close the window.

- 3. In the toolbar and the top of the Premiere Elements window, click Capture.**

The Premiere Elements Capture window appears as shown in Figure 1-12. You should see the words `Capture Device Online` at the top of the window. If you see a message that says `Capture Device Offline`, see Chapter 6 for more on video capture.



Figure 1-12: The Capture window is where you capture video from your digital camcorder.

4. Rewind the tape in your camcorder to the beginning of a section that you want to capture.

You may notice that as you play and rewind your camcorder tape, the video image from the camcorder appears in the Capture window.

5. Click the Play button in the Capture window to begin playing the tape, and click the Capture button to start capturing some video.

6. After you've captured a few minutes of video, click the Stop Capture button.

7. Close the Capture window when you're done capturing video.

You now see a collection of video clips in the Premiere Elements Media window, as shown in Figure 1-13. These are the video clips that you captured from the camcorder, and they are ready to be used in a movie project.



Capture problems are usually caused by a computer that hasn't been properly prepared for video capture. If you have any trouble capturing video, I show how to prepare your computer for capture in Chapter 6.



Figure 1-13:
Captured
video clips
show up in
the Media
window.

Assembling the movie

After you've captured some video, turning your footage into a movie is easy. (Of course, I am skipping the fancy stuff that you can do using later chapters in this book.) Follow these steps:

- 1. If your Premiere Elements screen doesn't look something like Figure 1-11, click Edit on the Premiere Elements toolbar.**

If the workspace seems stubborn and won't change to the basic editing layout, choose Window⇨Restore Workspace⇨Edit. For more on setting up your Premiere Elements workspace, visit Chapter 3.

- 2. To preview a clip, double-click it in the Media window.**

The clip loads into the Monitor window, where you can click the Play button to play the clip. For more on previewing clips and selection portions of clips to use in movies, see Chapter 7.

- 3. Click-and-drag some clips from the Media window and drop them on the Timeline as shown in Figure 1-14.**

For now, just drop each clip on the track labeled Video 1, and drop the clips one after the other in the Timeline in the order in which you want them to play. Chapter 8 gives more detailed information on putting movies together using the Timeline.

- 4. Click the Timeline button at the top of the Monitor window, and then click Play to preview the movie you have put together in the Timeline.**

Drag clips from here.

Click to switch from Monitor to Timeline mode.

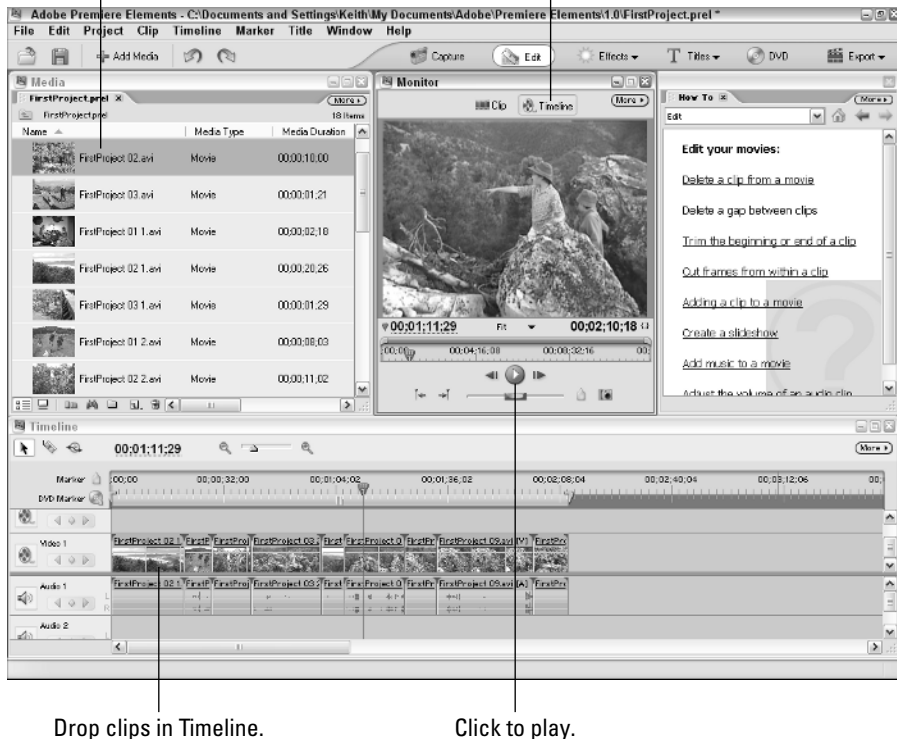


Figure 1-14: Drop clips in the Timeline to assemble your movie.

Saving your movie for the Web

After you've put together a basic movie in the Timeline, Premiere Elements lets you quickly save it in a Web-friendly format. One of the formats you can choose is the Windows Media format. Check out Chapters 15 and 16 for more on preparing movies for online use in either the Windows Media or Apple QuickTime formats. To quickly export your movie in Windows Media format:

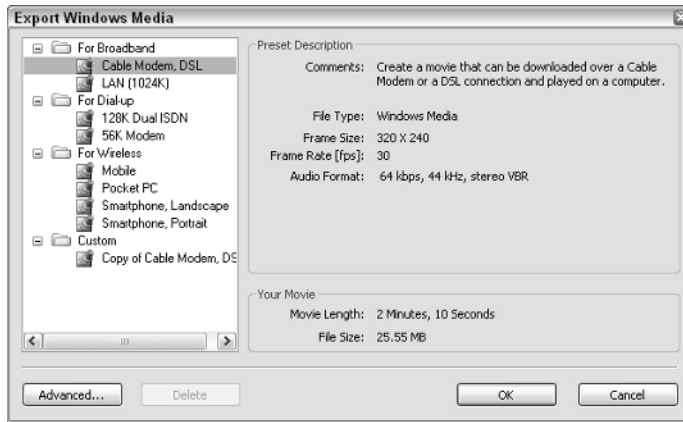
- 1. Click Export on the Premiere Elements toolbar, and choose Windows Media from the menu that appears.**

Alternatively, you can choose File→Export→Windows Media.

- 2. In the Export Windows Media dialog box that appears (see Figure 1-15), choose Cable Modem/DSL in the menu on the left and click OK.**

The exact format you choose isn't important right now. For more on what the different formats mean, see Chapters 15 and 16.

Figure 1-15:
Exporting
your movie
in a Web-
friendly
format is
easy.



- 3. In the Save File dialog box that appears, choose a location in which to save the file, enter a filename for the movie file, and click Save.**

A Rendering dialog box appears. *Rendering* is the process that Premiere Elements goes through when it applies your edits and compresses a movie project into its final output format. Rendering may take a few seconds or minutes, depending on the length of your movie and the speed of your computer. When rendering is complete, locate the movie file, and double-click it to open it in Windows Media Player. Congratulations! You've just made your first movie!