

# Mastering After Effects 5 Minute Tips

## Camera Expressions Recipe Card

### NOTES:

I hope you enjoy this tutorial. Animating a camera in After Effects can be a frustrating experience. Controlling where the camera is pointing is just as important as controlling the camera position. Simple is always better. I like to set up shots the same way I would on a real set. It's always easier to move the camera and have the actors stand still or keep the camera in one spot and move the actors. It is not impossible to move both the actors and the camera at the same time, it just takes more planning.

Numbers in the Follow Me movie correspond directly with the steps in this recipe card. If you follow along you should be able to complete this project in about 40 minutes.

### Part 1: Setup

1. Import road\_course.ai as a composition with cropped layers
2. Add Master Null (*Ctrl/Cmnd + Alt/Option + Shift + Y*)
3. Select all layers and enable 3D (*Ctrl/Cmnd + A, Click 3D*)
4. Select Sign 1 and Sign 2 layer and reveal anchor point (a)
5. Multiply the Y anchor point value by 2 to re-position anchor point
6. Press R to reveal the layer Anchor Point and rotate on the X axis 90°
7. Select all letters (*Ctrl/Cmnd + a*)
8. Parent all layers to the Master Null
9. Reveal rotation for the Master Null and rotate on the X axis -90°
10. Select all layers and release the children
11. Add a camera with a 50mm lens (*Ctrl/Cmnd + Alt/Option + Shift + C*)
12. Set Camera Auto-Orientation to Orient Along Path (*Ctrl/Cmnd + Alt/Option + O*)
13. Create a D1/DV size solid as a guide, set transfer mode to screen, set transparency to 40%, Lock layer (*Ctrl/Cmnd + Y, Ctrl + L*)
14. Select all layers, lock the camera, make Master Null the parent
15. Move the Master Null Y axis only to 1028 to frame up the shot
16. Select all layers and release the children

### Part 2: Camera Path

1. Select the Stripe Layer (Layer 10), edit original (*Ctrl/Cmnd + E*)
2. In Adobe Illustrator select the path for the stripe layer using the layers palette and copy the path (Illustrator 10 or Illustrator CS required)
3. Return to After Effects, unlock the Camera and select the Camera Position Property
4. Set a keyframe for Position (*Shift + Alt/Option + P*) and paste
5. Change the view to TOP
6. Reset the position and rotation of the Master Null
7. Make the Master Null the Parent of the Camera
8. Rotate the Master Null -90°, then release the parenting
9. Select all Camera position keyframes
10. Use *Animation>Keyframe Assistant>Time Reverse Keyframes* to reverse camera direction
11. Make any necessary adjustment to camera path - Change to Active Camera to preview



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page 2

### NOTES:

Expressions are a powerful tool that you should learn to use. Most of us aren't programmers and are not very comfortable with writing code. Fortunately, most of the language that you need is all ready written for you. All you have to do is learn a few punctuation rules and you will be off and running.

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### Part 3: Expressions

1. Start an expression for Camera 1 Orientation (*Alt/Option click stop watch*)
2. Enter the following expression:

```
lookAhead = .2; // How far ahead do you want to look?
lookAt(position, position.value_at_time(time+lookAhead))
```
3. Add two Sliders to the Master Null, Name the first lookAhead
4. Select the value (.2) in the Camera Orientation property, drag the pickwhip to the lookAhead slider to change the expression to:

```
lookAhead = thisComp.layer("Master Null").effect("lookAhead")("Slider");
lookAt(position, position.value_at_time(time+lookAhead))
```
5. Name the second Slider Elevation
6. Reveal the camera Position property by pressing "p"
7. Start and expression for Camera 1 Position
8. Enter the following expression:

```
x = position [0];
y = position [1] - effect("Elevation")("Slider");
z = position[2];
[x, y, z]
```
9. Set Camera 1 Auto Orientation to off (*Ctrl/Cmnd + Alt/Option + o*)
10. Edit Slider range for lookAhead for a maximum value of 2 (*context click or right click Slider and select Edit Value*)
11. Scale Grass layer to 500%
12. Set keyframes for Elevation to adjust the camera position above the roadway
13. Set keyframes for lookAhead to frame adjust left and right framing
14. Set keyframes for Z rotation to add roll to the camera
15. Adjust velocity curves for all keyframes to smooth out motion
16. Turn off guide layer, set quality to best or collapse transformations, enable motion blur
18. Drop animateCam comp in a NTSC D1 comp for rendering

