Nuke VFX Compositing Essentials
Getting Started

Welcome to Steve Wright's Nuke VFX Compositing Essentials, the professional way to learn Nuke VFX Compositing. This course uses a combination of video tutorials, reading assignments, and a weekly Nuke assignment that is reviewed online with your mentor using Skype. If you don't have a Skype account you will need to set one up – it's free. The videos are played off of the FX Ecademy website while the project media is downloaded to your workstation. The following information will help you to get oriented to the organization of the course.

Hopefully you have already purchased the 4th edition of my book *Digital Compositing for Film and Video* as there are weekly reading assignments from it.

How to get set up

First, make a *Nuke VFX Compositing* folder on your workstation where you will keep all of the project media. You can give it any name you want. Second, download the *Lesson 01 Media.zip* file into that folder and unzip it. It will create a new folder named *Lesson 01 Media* with all the media elements in there for the lesson. Be sure to put all future lesson media files in the same *Nuke VFX Compositing* folder and don't change the name of the lesson media folder (i.e. *Lesson 01 Media*). Your folders should look like this:

Nuke VFX Compositing (your name may vary)
     Lesson 01 Media
     Lesson 02 Media
     Lesson 03 Media, etc. etc.

First thing each week

Once you have the week's media unzipped the first thing to do is to open the *Lesson Info.pdf* file. It contains an overview of the week's lesson, total run time of the videos, disk space required for the media, the reading assignments and resources for the week. So as soon as you finish with this *Getting Started.pdf* file you should read the *Lesson 01 Info.pdf* file to see what's happening in week one.

Nuke VFX Compositing Essentials
Getting Started

Keyboard Shortcuts

A special bonus of this course is my own personal list of the most important Nuke keyboard shortcuts for Mac and Windows in the *Lesson 01 Media / Keyboard Shortcuts* folder. Print the one you need and keep it by your workstation. Nuke has hundreds of them, but these are the ones you will use most often and cannot live without. Over time you can learn the others.

The videos

The videos are available to you one lesson at a time after you pass each lesson but you may go back and review earlier videos at any time.

We have developed our videos through many years of teaching Nuke in versions from Nuke5 to the current version. As features have changed and new features have been introduced we have updated those videos. Consequently, the user interface in some videos will look a little different from what you will see in your current version of Nuke. Just focus on the lesson content and don't let get distracted by minor user interface differences that don't affect the learning points.

You will also occasionally see two videos on the same topic so be sure to watch them both. While they will obviously have some overlapping content, there will also be important new information in each video that you won't want to miss.

The Exercise Files

All of the media for each lesson is in that lesson's media folder and consists of Nuke scripts, images, and clips. The nuke scripts are at the top of the folder with the media isolated in a separate Media folder that is organized like this:

> Exercise Files > **Lesson 01 Media** >
>> nuke script1.nk
>> nuke script2.nk
>> nuke script3.nk
>> **Media** >
>>> image1
>>> image2
>>> clip1
>>> clip2

Nuke VFX Compositing Essentials
Getting Started

The video will tell you to load a Nuke script with an on-screen message like this:

Exercise Files > Lesson 01 Media > 01-01 user interface.nk

When you load that Nuke script it will automatically load all of the image files. No need to re-link the media as long as you leave things in their original folders. When the video has no Nuke script to load it will say:

Exercise Files > NONE

The Nuke User Guide

Each week there are readings from the Nuke User Guide which is only available on line. You can browse to each one from within Nuke using the Help Menu on the top menu bar or click on the links below. The Help is organized into four sections:

1) **Using the Compositing Environment** – general background information about Nuke such has how to use the Viewer, Toolbars, and File browsing.

Nuke top menu bar > Help > Documentation > Foundry Online Help > GETTING STARTED
> Nuke Studio Environments > Using the Compositing Environment

https://learn.foundry.com/nuke/11.1/content/getting_started/using_interface/using_compositing_env.html

2) **Compositing with Nuke** – details on specific Nuke operations such as how to work with Channels, Temporal Operations, and Working with Color.

Nuke top menu bar > Help > Documentation > Foundry Online Help > USER GUIDE
> Compositing with Nuke

https://learn.foundry.com/nuke/11.1/content/comp_environment/nuke/nuke_intro.html

3) **Advanced Compositing with NukeX and Nuke Studio** – describes the several NukeX only nodes such as LensDistortion and CameraTracker.

Nuke top menu bar > Help > Documentation > Foundry Online Help > USER GUIDE
> Compositing with Nuke > Advanced Compositing with NukeX and Nuke Studio

https://learn.foundry.com/nuke/11.1/content/comp_environment/nukex/nukex_intro.html

More…

Nuke VFX Compositing Essentials
Getting Started

4) **Reference Guide** – documentation for each individual node.

Nuke top menu bar > Help > Documentation > Foundry Online Help > REFERENCE GUIDE
> 2D Nodes
> 3D Nodes
> Utility Nodes

https://learn.foundry.com/nuke/11.1/content/reference_guide.html

Resources

The *Resources* section of each week's *Lesson Info.pdf* contains links to Foundry videos that relate to the week's lesson. Some of those links will cover related topics and others will cover the same topics as the week's videos, but it is always good to hear the same story as told by others because they invariably include new details that you will find useful.

Following Directions

In the real world of visual effects following directions is a critical job skill. Your VFX supervisor will sit with you and give you a list of revisions to your shot and you must accurately make all the changes without missing any. In this course it is also important that you follow all directions to start building this important work habit. So read and follow all directions carefully.

Turning in Assignments

Each week there is a weekly assignment in the form of a prepared Nuke script for you to fill out and turn in. In week two for example, you will find the *Lesson 02 assignment.nk* file in the *Lesson 02 Media* folder. Make a copy of the assignment file and append your last name to it like this:

Lesson 02 assignment_**lastname**.nk

You then open your copy of the assignment and do the exercises. If you wish to practice version control you can append _v01, _v02, _v03, etc. to the filename. Preserving the original assignment will come in handy should you have a catastrophic meltdown while doing the assignment. Each week turn in your

Nuke VFX Compositing Essentials
Getting Started

assignment to your mentor simply by attaching it to an email. Then copy the filename of your assignment and past it into the email subject line like this:

SUBJECT: Lesson 02 assignment_lastname.nk

Your mentor will immediately know which lesson it is and who it is from and will reconnect the media at his end to see exactly what you did in the assignment. Do not send images or renders - just the Nuke script.

Recommended Operational Order

Each week you will have four learning resources – videos, readings from my book, User Guide readings, and the weekly assignment. I recommend that you execute these in the following order each week:

1) The reading from my book – to learn the theory of the topics
2) The Nuke tutorial videos – to learn the Nuke operators for those topics
3) The reading from the Nuke User Guide – to fill in any blanks left by the videos
4) The weekly assignment – to apply what you have learned

The videos cover most, but not all of the information on each topic so reading the Nuke User Guide is essential for a complete education.

Recording the sessions

You can purchase an inexpensive screen recorder to record your mentor sessions, but these recordings are for your personal use only and must not be shared with others. There are many choices, but Movavi makes a good one for Mac and Windows for only $29.95 (http://www.movavi.com/screen-capture).

Once you are done with this *Getting Started.pdf* proceed to the *Lesson 01 Info.pdf* file to get started on your first lesson.

Enjoy!
Steve Wright

FX Ecademy