



Important Things You Might Want to Know About Switches

Kelly Charlebois, ATP, TechACCESS

- A switch is a simple technology that the user activates to control an object. People with limited motor movement and/or limited cognitive skills are good candidates for consideration of switch use.
- An appropriately selected switch allows an individual to control toys, appliances, environmental control devices, communication devices, mobility devices, computers, etc. Some devices, such as iPads, can also be controlled via a switch.
- There are many types of switches available through catalogs that differ in size, color, shape, sensitivity, cost etc. But all switches act as an ON/OFF button.
- Switch placement is critical to efficient operation of the switch. A good switch site enables an individual to activate a switch reliably, repeatedly, and without fatigue. Sometimes, consultation with a physical therapist is required to determine the most appropriate switch placement.
- Switches provide visual, tactile, kinesthetic, and auditory feedback. Selecting the right switch for an individual means matching the person's needs with the appropriate feedback.
- A person may have and use several different switch sites depending on the activity, the device being operated, position, time of day, etc.
- A person may have to learn how to "use a switch" by practicing until motor memory is established and/or a cognitive relationship is established.
- A "continuous" switch mode operates a device as long as the switch is held in the on position.
- A "latching" switch mode requires the user to hit the switch once to start an operation and once to end an operation.
- A "timed" switch mode activates a device for an adjustable period of time before stopping, requiring the switch user to access the switch again to re-activate it. This is a good mode to use when learning to use switches.
- A very effective use of a switch is to pair it with a device or software, which will enable the user to select one item from many items. This is called "scanning". Scanning can be simple (choosing one out of two items) or complex (selecting one item out of many). Complex scanning is used on high-level communication

TechACCESS

161 Comstock Parkway, Cranston, RI 02921

(401) 463-0202 Fax (401) 463-3433

techaccess@techaccess-ri.org

www.techaccess-ri.org

devices to increase rate, to provide access to computer applications, and to operate environmental control devices such as in houses designed for people with disabilities.

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