

Akash Sablok

# Switches

**T**here are many types of switches in our lives. There are electrical switches to turn lights and appliances on and off; there are traffic lights that change colour, telling us when we can and cannot proceed; there are switches in our brain telling us to do or not do something; and there are buttons on our computers.

You're probably thinking that buttons on a computer are not switches, they're just buttons. The truth is the basic principal operation of a computer relies on switches. The code under which a computer runs is 0 and 1, 0 being the *off* switch and 1 being the *on* switch.

When you type on your keyboard, you are sending a series of 0s and 1s to the computer, telling it what character to display on the screen. For example, hit the letter "A" and keyboard will send the code "01000001" to the processor, to the video card, and finally to the monitor. For the same letter, but lower case, the code is "01100001." Each letter and symbol has its own code.

With so many options available to a computer-user today, here are some products to help you "switch" to what suits you best.

## Software Switching

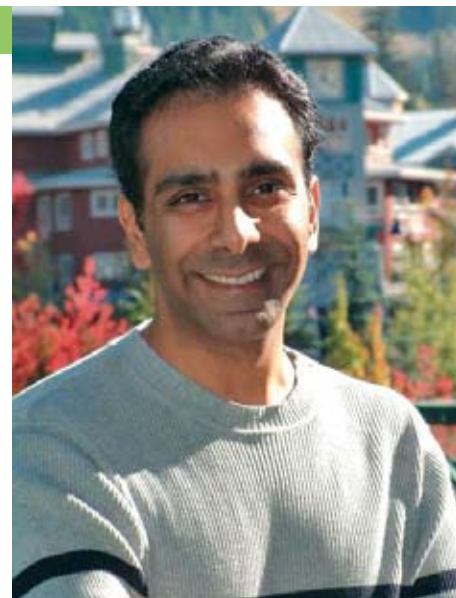
Switching operating systems on a computer is not as easy as changing your shirt. Many steps are involved, such as deleting an old operating system, i.e., Windows, Linux, Mac OSX, formatting or partitioning a hard drive, then installing a new operating system.

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If the last paragraph has you scratching your head, don't worry, Parallels Desktop for Mac from the Parallels Corporation will help clarify.

Parallels Desktop for Mac allows you to use one or more operating systems on your Intel-powered iMac, Mac Mini, MacBook, or MacBook Pro. What this means is you can run Mac OSX and another popular operating system (OS) on the same Apple computer.

You can purchase the program from the Website (download) or buy it



from a retail store. Either way, it's very easy to install. With the recently added Parallels Installation Assistant, the setup is pretty much automatic. You install Parallels, you insert your second operating system's install disc, enter your name, company name, install key, and click Go. That's it.

I installed Windows XP Professional, a great operating system in itself, on a 20" iMac. Once I put in the Windows install disc and my name and product key entry, I did not need to enter any additional information, select settings, or answer any difficult



technical questions that a PC needs answered during a Windows install.

Once installed, you can easily, ah, switch between operating systems. This is great for users who only have software in a particular format. For example, if you have Word for Windows and Eudora Pro Email on the Mac, you won't have to buy additional copies of each to run on two separate computers; your one computer can run both.

Switching between the two operating systems is quite cool. You simply run the Parallels software, click on the OS, and Parallels will shift the whole screen over to the new OS.

Unlike Apple's beta program—Boot Camp—Parallels does not require you to restart your computer, nor do you have to install separate drivers for hardware running under Windows. And unlike Boot Camp, you can run OSs other than just Windows XP SP2 (service pack 2). Some OSs that Parallels can handle include Linux, DOS, Windows 3.1, Windows 98, Windows 2000, and even the latest Windows Vista.

Parallels will cost you US\$79.99, whereas the beta version of Boot Camp is currently offered as a free download. I expect Boot Camp to cost the same or more once its final version is released.

[www.parallels.com](http://www.parallels.com)

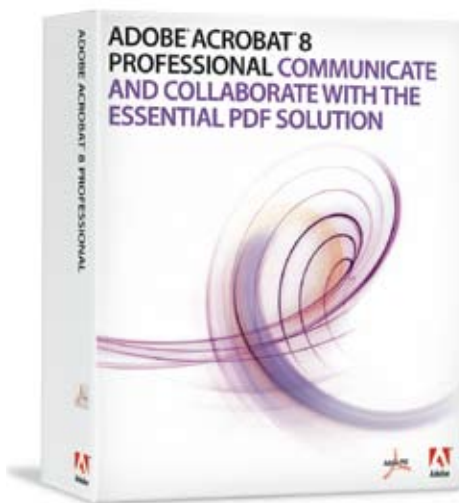
### Acrobat 8

A new version of the very popular program "Acrobat" is about to be released.

Those who are e-filing land title documents under EFS know that you need Acrobat 6 Standard as a minimum. All documents that are e-filed must be saved in the Acrobat format, a PDF file.

Version 7 of Acrobat upped the ante quite a bit, costing a bit more than Version 6, but offering a lot more tools.

The question is: Do you need to "switch" to Version 8? This latest version adds some neat new features and upgrades some of the existing ones.



Speed is the biggest improvement because documents are created faster and—correcting a big pet peeve of many users—print faster now. Of course, a faster computer with more RAM memory would help, too.

As the world adopts PDF files as the standard for electronic document processing, it's encouraging to know that we in British Columbia are ahead of the game. Many users have been using Acrobat to create non-e-filing documents as well—everything from undertaking letters, scanned copies of documents, even recipes. Hey, it's not all work!

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More newbies include the ability to scan printed forms and have Acrobat 8 automatically recognize form fields for creating your own fillable forms. This is a huge time-saving option that will help reduce hours spent on the office typewriter.

You can combine multiple files into a searchable, sortable PDF package that maintains the individual security settings and digital signatures of each included PDF document. What that means is you can have a letter, a "locked" Form A, and a "locked" statement of adjustments in one PDF file, making it easier to email.

The Pro version of Version 8 allows you to back-convert PDF files into editable Word documents, retaining the documents' format, fonts, and tables. You can also permanently remove metadata, hidden layers, and other concealed information, thus providing greater security.

Users will appreciate the new intuitive interface, now easier to understand and more straightforward for performing tasks.

For those who review PDF files created by others, the revised commenting tool allows you to add sticky notes in PDFs, to strikethrough text, even to mark inserted text. The original document is not changed when adding comments; instead, the comments are layered with annotations. Those with Acrobat Reader only, a free download from the Adobe Website, will now be able to read the comments.

You can find Acrobat 8 Standard for about \$399, with the upgrade version around \$130. This is a good price and worth the upgrade if you have Version 6 or 7. The Professional version is a lot pricier at \$599, with the upgrade at \$199.

[www.adobe.ca](http://www.adobe.ca)

### Simply Accounting

A lot of small businessowners do not have the budget to hire big, expensive accounting firms; they rely on smaller firms that do basic filing. Small businessowners do a lot of their own bookkeeping. When tax time comes around, they pull out the shoebox—or similar container—of receipts and take it down to their accountant who puts it all together and files a return.

A lot of people are "switching" to software solutions to do the same thing. Simply Accounting Premium 2007 from Sage Software is one such solution.

The software is designed to make accounting tasks simple—note I didn't say *fun*, but definitely simple. You set up an account or accounts using an interview-style process, specified for your type of industry, i.e., legal, construction, medical, retail. If, for



example, you choose the medical industry, the software will not ask you questions about your livestock inventory—that's reserved for the farming industry. If you have livestock in your medical office, you may need more help than a software program can provide.

Once it is set up, you can set up clients, invoicing, and accounts receivable/payable and even handle employee payroll. You can download bank statements directly from financial institution Websites because most banks and credit unions provide you with an option to do so.

The Basic version, which pulls about \$99 from your general ledger, covers a lot of ground. You can write cheques; prepare purchase/sales orders and quotes; handle inhouse payroll; track GST/PST; handle budgeting (to buy a new computer!); integrate with Microsoft Word, Excel, and (new for 2007) Outlook; generate a full-time audit trail; reconcile bank statements online; and for those of you who are bilingual, switch between English and French on the fly.

The Pro version is all that and a bag of chips, the chips being the ability to store up to 100 years of financial history (the Basic does 2 years); generate monthly financial history; view bank account transaction reports; integrate with Sage's ACT! contact and customer manager; and

allow access to data for two users. Look to spend about \$200 for the Pro version.

Depending on your provincial government, with either version you can set whether or not vacation pay is calculated for the employee on released vacation. Now, calculating vacation time/pay is fun.

**Our brain is muscle, so why not exercise it and have fun?!**

There is no actual trust accounting module built into the software, but a working setup can be created. It does take time to configure, but it can be done.

The program is much quicker and more accurate than just using a spreadsheet such as Excel or Lotus 1-2-3 to track business finances. It will even convert data from other accounting software.

There are two other versions of Simply Accounting—Premium, for up to six users—and an Accountant Edition. I would definitely recommend you have your accountant review the accounts before you file your taxes or payroll remittances. The Accountant Edition allows your accountant to receive your data file—via email, for example—for review.

[www.simplyaccounting.com](http://www.simplyaccounting.com)

### Switch to Some Fun

At the end of your OS switching/e-filing/accounting day, it's nice to be able to just kick back and enjoy the fruits of your labour. Here are some ways to help you relax.

If you are one of the lucky few to get your hands on a Sony PlayStation 3 this last holiday season, you're also one of many that bought the system just for its Blu-Ray DVD playing capabilities. Blu-Ray DVDs offer the highest resolution you can get—true HD 1080p.

The new Blu-Ray DVD remote from Sony turns your PS3 into a fully fledged Blu-Ray DVD player. You can

use the regular PS3 controller, but for 30 bucks, the remote is a worthwhile investment. See [www.playstation.com](http://www.playstation.com).



If you are one of the even luckier few to get your mitts on a Nintendo Wii, you'll love the latest title, Wii Play. Similar to the fun that can be had with Wii Sports—for example, baseball, tennis, boxing—Wii Play gives you pool, air hockey, tank battles, table tennis rally, Mii poses, and a cow-riding race (don't ask). You use the Wiimote like a cue stick in pool, like a paddle in air hockey, and like a racquet in table tennis. The game comes with an extra controller.



Our brain is muscle, so why not exercise it and have fun?! For portable enjoyment, Nintendo's amazing Brain Age game will train your brain once a day. Their latest title Clubhouse Games includes cards, checkers, backgammon, etc. Play against the computer or with up to seven friends with one game card via the Multi-Card Play or DS Download Play.

See [www.nintendo.ca](http://www.nintendo.ca)

Microsoft has an interesting title as well for the Xbox360. Hitting a piñata at a kid's birthday is so much



fun, no matter your age. Do it on the screen anytime you want with Viva Piñata for the Xbox 360. See [www.xbox.com](http://www.xbox.com). ▲

**Akash Sablok** practises as a Notary Public in Vancouver with his father Tarlok Sablok. Akash writes regular technology and automotive columns for several publications across Canada and appears as a guest technology reviewer for CityTV's *Breakfast Television*.

Voice: 604 325-9200  
[asablok@notaries.bc.ca](mailto:asablok@notaries.bc.ca)