

Switch Basics

Publisher

SoftTouch Software

System Requirements

Macintosh

- Macintosh 68040 or PowerMac
- 13" monitor
- 16 MB RAM
- CD-ROM drive

Other PC

- 486 PC or higher
- 13" color monitor
- Windows 95
- 16 MB RAM
- CD-ROM drive

Software Description

Young switch users will enjoy the many pictures and animation of real fish and jungle animals in *Switch Basics*. The CD-ROM for Macintosh and Windows contains the following nine activities: (1) "Aquarium," (2) "Tiger," (3) "Step Forward," (4) "Talking Fish," (5) "Celebrate," (6) "Beauty Parlor," (7) "Cloud Cover," (8) "Puzzles," and (9) "Barber Shop." Within each activity, the user has two or more scanning options as well as options for different types of music or sound. For example, in "Aquarium," the child can choose bubbles or Pacific Island music, while the "Cloud Cover" activity has a choice of African music, cloud music, or animal sounds. The variety of content is designed to appeal to a range of ages and interests. This program can also be used with IntelliKeys overlays.

Switch Basics

Introduction

This program offers switch and IntelliKeys users a variety of activities which combine real photos and sounds into an appealing learning experience. Screens which focus on fish and animals can be used as part of integrated curriculum activities.

Materials

- Computer
- *Switch Basics*
- Switch interface and switch with switch holder or mount, or IntelliKeys with overlays

Ahead of Time

Set up the environment with the switch placed in a stable position and the monitor at an appropriate eye level for children. Select the “Aquarium” part of the menu so that the children will get a response when the switch is pressed.

Introductory Activity

This program has several themes which could be used as the basis for activities. Begin by reading a book to the children about a subject chosen from the program such as fish. Talk about different kinds of fish. Encourage the children to talk or use their communication devices to tell what they already know about fish and what more they would like to know.

Computer Activity

Select the “Aquarium” and switch access from the program menu. Begin with the “Click the Switch” option which places a fish on the screen each time the switch is pressed. Encourage children to explore the switch and make fish appear on the screen. See if they can visually track the fish as they move across the screen. Talk about the similarities and differences among the fish.

For children who are able to learn beginning scanning, select the “Zoom Scan” in the “Aquarium” portion of the program. Talk about the large fish at the top of the screen and how it looks like one of four fish that will zoom larger and move next to the top fish. Encourage the children to explore the switch. If the switch is pressed at the incorrect time, nothing will happen. The scan will continue until the right match is made. Use this portion of the program in combination with picture cards or play fish to make the activity more meaningful for children.

Select “Cloud Cover” with the single switch access for an animal theme. Children can uncover a picture of an animal with two to ten switch presses. Begin with two presses, then increase the number as the children become familiar with the program. Talk about what type of animal is being uncovered. Encourage the children to predict, if possible, what animal it will be. The program also has the option of African music or cloud or wind music, which adds soothing, peaceful sounds for children.

Use “Beauty Shop” or “Barber Shop,” portions of the menu for children who are able to scan. Each of these selections contains a simple scan and a complex scan. Children will enjoy creating a girl’s or boy’s face by pressing their switch to make choices of skin color, hair color and style, eye color, and lips. The scan progresses both vertically and horizontally to help children learn advanced switch skills.

IntelliKeys overlays can also be used with this program. The fish overlay which goes with the “Aquarium” activity may help children focus on pressing the device to add a fish to the screen. The IntelliKeys can be used as a large switch for children having difficulty using a smaller device. They may enjoy having a large activation area.

Extended Activity

The following ideas are extensions for the “Aquarium.” Similar activities could be designed around other parts of the program:

- • Eat goldfish crackers or gummy fish in jello cups for snack time.
- • Play at the sensory table with plastic fish.
- • Make a fishing pond in the classroom and adapt a pole so that all children can fish.
- • Take a field trip to a pet store or to a pond to see real fish.
- • Draw or paint pictures of fish.
- • Make a graph of children’s pets, including fish.
- • Play a matching game with printed pictures from the software.
- • Read books about fish, and have books readily accessible to children in the reading center.

Summary

This program serves as a springboard for activities related to several classroom themes (e.g., pets, ocean life, and jungle animals). The options of switch and touch tablet access make it especially appealing for young children with disabilities. The real photos and sounds in the program and the design of off-computer activities help to make the content meaningful to all children.