

Switch Ideas for the Classroom  
Barely Adapted from Original ideas by Molly Shannon)

1. Place a switch that plays music inside a shape sorter so that it will activate when the shapes are inserted.
2. Encourage the child to make a walking switch toy knock over blocks.
3. Stage a race with two children operating two walking switch toys.
4. Bubbles: Use an electronic fan with a PowerLink from AbleNet or use a battery-operated fan to blow bubbles. If available, use an electronic bubble blower with a switch.
5. Place bump and go switch toys within confined areas, such as a toy pen, hula hoop, box lid, or giant Frisbee turned upside down.
6. Dress up the switch toys to reflect the seasons or classroom units, example: attach hat for witch, doll clothes for holidays.
7. Add a sensory component to various switch toys: add fragrance or extracts to the toys, cool them in a refrigerator.
8. Use electronic make-up mirrors for play with face painting and dress-up with community helper hats.
9. Have a friend hold a hair dryer while the child operates a hair or nail dryer to dry doll hair, fingernail polish, or art projects.
10. Place cards on the fireman's tall ladder toy at various heights so that the child can stop when the fireman gets to the various cards. Try colors, shapes, numbers, the weather, peers name's, center choices, book and song suggestions.
11. Use a fan or blow dryer to operate a pinwheel, windsock, or wind chimes.
12. Encourage the child to have the walking toy walk to specific classmates or stop and go upon command or play Red Light/Green Light.
13. Cut a door out of a box and have the child walk the switch pig or cow into "Old MacDonald's Farm" or a doghouse, etc.
14. Use a water pic to play with water or to paint with diluted paper on paper placed flat on the floor or upright at an angle.
15. Have the child knock over blocks that other students stack by using a moving toy (car, truck, walking pig, etc.) connected to a switch.
16. Encourage the child to operate a massage pad for himself or a peer.
17. Facilitate the child's ability to turn on lights in the room, holiday lights, lights in a classroom tent, lava lamps, light sculptures, backlight, etc.
18. Feed and/or water classroom pets, plants, and assist in cooking activities using the pouring switch or water pic.
19. Classroom appliances can be a great source of fun, participation, and sensory experiences using the PowerLink with hot air popcorn poppers, shake machine, toaster oven, sandwich machine, and blenders with adult supervision.

20. Remember to use the classroom tape recorder with switches for independent music play or supplying music for the whole class.
21. Read books using low tech talking switches to speak the repetitive lines of the book.
22. Partial participation activities with peers can be fun in the class with one child pouring ingredients and the other operating the Spin Art or blender for example.
23. There are a variety of Spin Art games now including standard, gel, and snack Spin Art.
24. A fan could also be used to blow paint or light-weight balls on an art project.
25. Speaking of art fun: attach markers to the back of switch cars or other moving toys or place the wheels of the car in the paint and then have the child "paint" on a large piece of paper.
26. Special switch-operated instant cameras are commercially available and may be very motivating for children to print pictures of peers for the classroom or for communication boards.
27. The child could also operate a slide projector in class with a book that has been photographed and made into slides.
28. The independent operation of an overhead projector for books copied to transparencies or a light box can be accomplished with the PowerLink.
29. Don't forget to explore whether a switch latch is needed for battery-operated toys and activities as this increases the child's control over the activity if he has mastered cause and effect. It is very difficult for many of our students to maintain their pressure on a switch surface. The electronic activities can be latched through the use of the PowerLink.
30. The classroom Lite Brite can be completed by a peer and turned on by the child with a disability.
31. Fans can be made a little more fun by attaching streamers or tying a cloth with various scents to the fan. There is a commercially available aroma battery-operated fan. Consider the use of aromatherapy machines as well.
32. Another home device that may prove useful are the various sound machines that the child could activate during quiet time or in a relaxing tent or area. (You will need to connect it to a PowerLink.)
33. Try placing walking switch toys inside the sensory tables filled with macaroni or beans and operated with a switch.
34. There are a variety of craft, game and toy machines that could be operated with a PowerLink: Easy Bake Oven, rock tumblers, "critter" machines, Elephant Butterfly game, Snow Cone Machine, Simon game, etc.

35. Consider the new realm of voice activated toys which can be activated with any sound or by pressing a simple talking switch: water gun, truck, trains.
36. Have the child with the disability be in charge of the music for musical chairs with the switch connected to the tape player.
37. During quiet time or in the relaxing tents, have the child operate an adapted flashlight for flashlight games. This can be done cooperatively as well with one child moving the light and the other child operating the battery-operated flashlight. (This requires a battery adapter.)
38. Holiday jobs could include being the child to light the pumpkin, turn on the Christmas lights, Hanukkah candles, "deliver Valentine's mail" via trucks or taped to walking toys, etc. Get out those PowerLinks!
39. Have the student help with washing the desks or tables at the end of a project by using a water pic and supplying the water for the job.
40. Have your switch user be the referee for any game by using one or more talking switches.
41. Classroom jobs/responsibilities: operating electronic pencil sharpener.
42. Clock communicator for choosing centers, identifying peers, choosing songs or books, playing games or general communicating.
43. Allow the child to use the PowerLink to turn on the quiet time video using a latch timer.
44. Attach an electric blower to a PowerLink to inflate balls, holiday decorations, inflatable mattresses, therapy balls, etc.
45. Let the child be the life of the party by operating the fog machine, blacklight, disco lights, air hockey table, karaoke machine, and music with a PowerLink.
46. Place a puppet on top of a bump and go toy for animation.
47. Encourage the child's object permanence by having the child move the switch toy behind a barrier or play tunnel.
48. Encourage the child to roll by placing a notebook or flat switch on the floor connected to a tape recorder or other favorite switch toy.
49. To facilitate walking with a walker, hide various switch toys around the room for the child to find.
50. Book adaptations:
  - o Physical: build up pages by lamination, cut books and place pages into plastic page protectors and put in binder or use D-rings or string to bind (remember to number the pages prior to cutting!), attach binder clips to pages, Velcro circles, felt circles or foam, hot glue 'blobs', hair barrettes (clips), adhesive carpet backing, cross-stitch mounting foam, weather stripping, furniture felt leg protectors, buy two copies of book and cut each out/mount on cardboard/laminate/ place in binder, attach ice cream sticks to pages to help turn, notebook dividers (large), turn pages using unsharpened pencils held with the eraser down

to turn the pages, use of book holders and stands, electronic page turners (very expensive!)

- o Language/Cognitive: use generic story time boards, adapt generic boards by attaching a few blank squares so that customize icons for specific icons (can even draw with dry-erase marker if blanks are laminated), book specific boards, sentence strips to summarize books on each individual page which are called " Talk About It" pictures, highlight repetitive lines or important text in the book, use talking devices to record the repetitive lines or fun text, tape record the book and play with a switch, develop a talking book using authoring software such as Intellipics, etc.