



# Users in Control: A Fresh Perspective on Accessibility

Episode 3

## Game Access: Let the Games Begin by Mike Phillips

For many new switch users, playing games with SwitchXS might seem like a daunting task, however, with a little practice and the right games even a novice can be up and clicking in no time. When I began using a single switch and scanning software to access my first PowerBook, I had no idea where to begin in terms of gaming. All I knew for sure was that I had to play something; gaming was in my blood.

To begin, it's best to start with games that don't require a great deal of quick action from the user, where preferably the situation isn't kill

or be killed. For instance, Freeverse Software's *Burning Monkey Solitaire* is a delightful suite of solitaire variations that don't require fast paced action. Not only is Burning Monkey Solitaire fun and visually pleasing, it also serves as fine practice for novice users to boost their mousing skills. A downloadable demo of *Burning Monkey Solitaire* is available from [www.freeverse.com](http://www.freeverse.com) with the full version available for \$24.95: an excellent price for an excellent game.

The true uniqueness of computer gaming is found in playing online against others. Multiplayer gaming

is often the most rewarding gameplay experience. So, where to begin? For the inexperienced switch user, many popular online games may be a bit too hectic, where things like casting spells, leading armies, and flanking an unwitting adversary can be frustrating. However, there are plenty of multiplayer games that provide copious amounts of fun, as well as the means to strengthen one's switching ability.

Once again we look to Freeverse Software and their aptly titled *Big Bang Board Games*, where they have taken the liberty of crafting seven

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### Cosmic Competition



Setting up a multiplayer game in *Big Bang Board Games* is quick and painless via any of the built-in multiplayer modes. For GameSmith, Freeverse Software's online gameplay system, one simply has to register an account and login. There are always plenty of friendly GameSmith users about, ever willing to play a game or twelve. Plus, a ranking system allows players to see just how they match up for each game.

Additionally, seamless integration with iChat makes finding an opponent as simple as sending an instant message. Upon launching any of the games,

players are presented with a radial menu of all their currently online buddies; one simply has to scroll



around the dial to invite their desired game pal to play. By clicking the invite button, an instant message is automatically sent to the buddy inviting them to play, as well as a small "game key" file. The invitee then downloads the key via iChat and opens it, which launches the appropriate game and connects them to their opponent. No fuss, no muss.

Each game also supports single-player gaming against bots, as well as multiplayer hotseat gameplay that does not require an internet connection.



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visually impressive board games and bundled them into a single collection that includes 4-in-a-Row, Backgammon, Chess, Checkers, Mancala, Reversi and Tic-Tac-Toe; each rendered in lovely OpenGL, each quite fun. Board games are an excellent stepping-stone in that they're incredibly entertaining, intellectually challenging and don't require a great deal of quick action from the user. Plus, they have nearly endless universal appeal. Not only are such games good for enhancing one's ability to maneuver the mouse via SwitchXS, but also they help to strengthen one's typing ability by way of in-game chatting. Nobody really wants to practice typing by writing essays. I know I never did. A downloadable demo of Big Bang Board Games is available from [www.freeverse.com](http://www.freeverse.com) with the full version available for \$24.95.

Another interesting game is Decipher's *The Lord of the Rings Online TCG* (Trading Card Game). Basically, players purchase digital trading cards

and form them into customized decks with which to battle other players. A starter deck goes for \$9.99 and contains all the basic cards needed to play. The game is entirely mouse based, making it quite good for crafting accurate mouse skills. *The Lord of the Rings Online TCG* game client is a free download and is available at [lotrcg.decipher.com](http://lotrcg.decipher.com).

As prime examples of where to begin, these games are just a glimpse of what is possible with SwitchXS. Often, some people are resistant to assistive technology because they don't realize that it can be fun. Assistive technology isn't just about doing homework, browsing the web and turning on one's bedroom lights. Assistive technology is an entire world of things, like killing zombies and casting spells while Aimee Mann sings Real Bad News in iTunes. It's whatever one can imagine. This article only covers the beginning, just enough to get users started. In my next piece I'll cover more advanced gaming options, so stay tuned. ☐



In games like *Unreal Tournament 2004* and *World of Warcraft*, there's "One thumb to rule them all" – mine! To see for yourself, check out Episode 4 of the video podcast, [Exploring the Frontiers of Assistive Technology](#).

This PDF and audio podcast is created by Mac users with physical, speech, or vision impairments. Featuring their experiences, it seeks to inform, inspire, and provide a platform for new ideas. Twice a year, some of the articles appear in a PDF of the AssistiveWare Newsletter, found at [www.assistiveware.com/newsletter.php](http://www.assistiveware.com/newsletter.php). A video podcast titled "Exploring the Frontiers of Assistive Technology" that features some of the contributors is also available.

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