Switch Features

Switches include a range of features that can be matched to the physical abilities of a student. Examine several switches to experience the range of differences within each feature. Consider the following when selecting a switch:

1. The *size* of the surface "target" that a student must activate.

How large does the surface have to be? How small might it be? Which areas actually activate the switch? the center? the corners? the edges? What does the switch feel like? Does the student prefer a particular texture? Can it be added to the surface later?

2. The amount of *force* (pressure) required to activate a switch.

How sensitive is the switch? Although a switch may be positioned in such a way that gravity can add to the force exerted, switch closure will depend on the amount of consistent exertion by the user. Switches are often described by the amount of force/pressure required for activation.

3. The amount of *travel* that a switch has.

Travel is the distance that a switch must be moved before it activates. Keep in mind that some switches are designed with more "play" than others; they are meant to be more flexible.

4. The type of switch *feedback* when it is activated.

Many switches make an auditory "click" when activated. This is a critical feature for many students. It lets them know when they have activated the switch. Other types of switch feedback include vibration or musical sound.

5. The *durability* of a switch is another important feature.

Some students may not be able to control the amount of pressure they use to activate a switch. A switch should be able to withstand repeated use.