

PARALLELS Parallels Desktop for Mac

★★★★★

£451 / VAT



Owners of Intel-based Macintosh computers have been able to run Windows XP thanks to the downloadable Boot Camp utility.

This allows Windows applications to be run at full speed, but requires the Mac to be rebooted every time you want to use them, which can be inconvenient.

Parallels Desktop is a virtualisation utility that allows you to run a different operating system and its applications alongside your regular Mac OS applications. The obvious choice is Windows XP, with which we tested, but you can also run older versions of Windows, as well as DOS, Solaris, Linux and OS/2.

Installing both Parallels Desktop and Windows was easy thanks to a well-illustrated manual, although the interface for changing the amount of hard disk space devoted to your virtual Windows PC doesn't always work properly. We set our drive

to be 160GB, but it was actually 200GB in size. Unfortunately, if you've already installed Windows as part of Boot Camp, you won't be able to use it with Parallels Desktop.

We tested an installation of Windows XP Professional Edition on

a MacBook Pro with a T2600 Core Duo processor and 2GB of RAM. We allocated 1GB of RAM to Parallels Desktop exclusively and ran our usual set of computer performance benchmarks. Parallels attained a score of 96 in our video-encoding test, 94 in our image-editing test, 89 in our multitasking test and 91 overall.

This is roughly equivalent to the performance we'd expect from a 3GHz Pentium 4, which is more than enough for running most everyday applications, but for taxing programs you'll get the best performance from Boot Camp. Parallels Desktop demands plenty of memory, especially if you run alongside lots of Mac applications. You can run multiple versions of Windows, such as 98 and XP, at the same time, although you'll need even more memory and free hard disk space.

There's currently no support for DirectX, so you'll have to use Boot Camp if you want to play Windows-only games. But other Windows applications we tested ran without a hitch. We were able to connect to a local wireless network without fiddling with any TCP/IP settings in



▲ Windows XP Professional Edition running in a Mac OS X window

Windows, allowing us to browse the web and print to a networked laser printer. We also successfully synchronised files and contacts between a Windows Mobile smartphone and Microsoft Outlook over USB.

Any attached USB devices will work only at USB 1.1 speeds. You can copy and paste text between Mac and Windows applications, but not images. Files can be shared between the Mac OS and Windows by copying them into designated shared folders, although we wish we could just drag and drop files between the two operating systems. If you have a second monitor connected to your Mac, you can devote it to displaying just your Windows applications.

Apple's Boot Camp is the best option if you want to play Windows games or need the fastest possible performance. Parallels Desktop still has a few rough edges, but it's well designed and allows Macs to run Windows applications conveniently and quickly.

Alan Lu

SUMMARY

- ✓ Don't need to reboot to use Windows
- ✓ Respectable performance
- ✗ Limited USB and games support

VIRTUALISATION SOFTWARE Requires Mac OS X 10.4.6 or later, Apple Mac with Intel processor, 512MB RAM

SUPPLIER www.amazon.co.uk
DETAILS www.parallels.com