Ease of Apple's Boot Camp Installation & Others

Personally, I thought Boot Camp was very easy to install, hey, this is Apple software we're talking about, remember?! You do need an Intel Mac, and OS X 10.4.x or higher.

The general procedure is:

1) If you have 10.4.x, get Boot Camp 1.4 beta (version at time of writing this) from a friend who downloaded it. If you have 10.5.x skip this step and step 2, it's already installed.
2) Run the installer, which will create a driver CD for you (you just need a CD burner and blank CD)
3) Use the Boot Camp application hard drive partitioner/formatter to partition/format your Windows hard drive (do not use any other partitioner). I suggest using the FAT32 format, unless you have "special" software where you can access an NTFS partition from Mac OS X.
4) Install Windows, and if running OS X 10.4.x when requested, use the driver CD that you created in step 2, above, or with 10.5.x insert the OS X 10.5.x install DVD to install Windows drivers. You can install Windows XP or Vista, I'd suggest XP, and I believe it has to be a 32-bit version, not a 64-bit version.

Ok, step 4 isn't quite so easy, as it's NOT Apple software you're installing, and I recall the Windows install hiccupped once on me, requiring me to "reinstall" Windows. Installing and updating Windows will take several hours, expect a good 4-8 hours (or longer) depending upon your familiarity with it.

Now, here's the really COOL thing about Boot Camp and what can be referred to as the "rocking" software, Parallels. Once you have installed Boot Camp, you can use the same installation for Parallels. You may ask, "What the heck does this mean?" Well, let me tell you.

It means if you are using OS X and don't want to reboot into Windows, you can run Parallels, using the very exact same installation of Windows you used when you installed Boot Camp. So, if you have all your Windows apps and files in the Boot Camp installation, and maybe even have a favorite desktop you put into your Boot Camp installation, it will all be "identical" in Parallels. "Everything" will work just as if you booted directly into Windows. (Please note that I quoted the words "identical" and "everything", as it is not exactly identical, and not quite everything is the same, but as long as you're not using some funky USB or Bluetooth devices, playing some graphics intensive

entertainment software, or otherwise trying to take over the world from a Windows machine, all the "normal" stuff will be identical and everything will work normally. The normal stuff is things like MS Office apps running in Windows, and things that don't make you say, "Wow!")

So, then, when you boot your computer in Windows (Boot Camp), all the changes you made in Windows-Parallels will be reflected in Windows-Boot Camp. Make sense now? How about a somewhat possible real-world example...

Let's say you're at a coffee shop and you need to get to a web page that requires Internet Explorer 7 (say it ain't so!). But you're in OS X, and battery power on your MacBook Pro is a little low so you don't want to reboot in fear that shutting down and booting into Windows may sap your battery's last remaining high-energy electrons. You remember you installed Windows XP in Boot Camp, and you installed Parallels, but never got around to installing Windows in Parallels directly. So, you wisely click on Parallels on your Dock, which starts up and you go through a little process to identify the Boot Camp partition from your Parallels setup. Press "Start Windows XP". From what I've noticed, Windows boots faster in Parallels, than it does when booting in Boot Camp, maybe it's just me, but there you have it, other opinions welcome.

The very first time you boot a Boot Camp partition in Parallels, Parallels has to do some "stuff" to get it to work for it, but it will not affect your Windows from booting normally directly in Boot Camp. The other advantage to this is Parallels has a "free" anti-virus program you can install in Windows, so that way your version of Windows is protected (well, kind of protected, anyway).

Now, open up Explorer 7 in Windows and go to your web page. Copy and paste or whatever you needed to do from this web page, and then you realize you have to use Outlook to get a certain file that can only be viewed in an Outlook 2007 shared folder (weird, huh?) So you run Outlook 2007 in the Boot Camp partition, but running Parallels, in OS X. You get your file in Outlook 2007, and then you close all Windows apps down. Last you shut down Windows (you have to shut down Windows when using a Boot Camp partition in Parallels before you quite Parallels, according to Parallels, "bad things may happen if you don't"). You quit Parallels, and suddenly your battery forces your Mac into energy save mode, and puts your computer to sleep... Phew, just in time!

Later on at home, you plug in your laptop and decide you want to look at that file in Outlook, but want to have "full" Windows speed, so you restart your Mac, holding down the <alt> (a.k.a. the <option>) key. Your MBP shows you two volumes to boot from, one says "Windows", perfect! You select it and your computer boots directly into Windows, never running OS X. Eventually Windows boots, you open Outlook, find your file and do what you need to. Then you keep yourself entertained with some "Windows only" game, life is good!

Ok, so maybe that was a long example, but I wanted to highlight some of the points in using the same Boot Camp installation for both Parallels, and natively booting directly into Windows. Note the file in Outlook was accessible in both Parallels and direct boot into Windows. Also note you used your entertainment software in the natively booted Windows, and not in Parallels; Parallels is not quite as good with graphics as of yet.

Hope this helps, and hope you realize that the best of both worlds, in my humble opinion, is to be able to use both Parallels and Boot Camp in symbiotic tranquility! I have used both and found that saving the space on having a virtual drive in Parallels (7-8 GBs or more) is very nice.

My two-cents, give or take a few dollars... hope this helps, (and don't get me started on CrossOver by CodeWeavers (http://www.codeweavers.com/products/cxmac/), or VMWare's Fusion product, similar to Parallels (http://www.vmware.com/products/fusion/) and can do many of the same things as Parallels. BTW - Did you know MS released a patch for Virtual PC, for those of you running on PPC processors?)

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