Parallels Desktop Enterprise Edition

Running Parallels Desktop as a Virtual Machine Server

Build 9.0.23350 or later

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CHAPTER 1

Running Parallels Desktop as a Virtual Machine Server

This guide is intended for IT administrators who want to run Parallels Desktop Enterprise Edition as a virtual machine server. To accommodate this requirement, Parallels Desktop Enterprise Edition can be run as a service (background process) without a graphical user interface. The virtual machines also run in the background with no virtual machine window displayed on the OS X desktop. When configured to run as a service, Parallels Desktop and the virtual machines start automatically when OS X starts without requiring a user to be logged in to OS X. You can have a high performance Mac running multiple virtual machines in the background to which users can connect remotely via VNC, RDP, SSH, and other remote tools. This guide describes how to configure and run Parallels Desktop and virtual machines as background processes.

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System Requirements

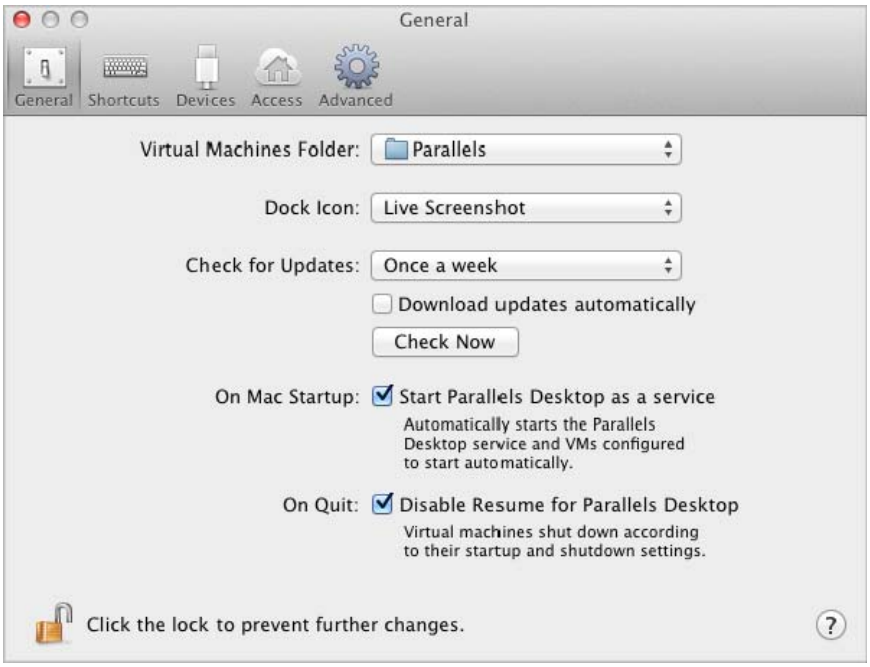
To run Parallels Desktop as a service, you need:

- Parallels Desktop build 9.0.23350 or later.
- Mac OS X 10.7.4 or later.

Configuring Parallels Desktop to Run as a Service

By default, Parallels Desktop is installed as an OS X application. To configure it to run as a service, do the following:

1 Open Parallels Desktop and click **Parallels Desktop > Preferences** in the menu bar. The preferences window opens.



2 Click **General** and select the **Start Parallels Desktop as a service** option.

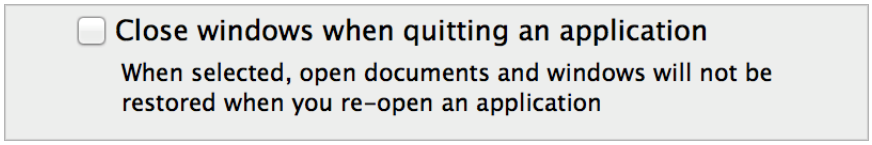
3 Select the **Disable Resume for Parallels Desktop** option. When this option is selected, a virtual machine will be shut down according to its startup and shutdown settings. If this option is cleared, the virtual machine will be either suspended or stopped regardless of its startup and shutdown settings or the user input. The rule of thumb is, if you want your virtual machines to continue running after the Parallels Desktop application is closed, you should select the **Disable Resume for Parallels Desktop** option.

To better understand this feature, consider the following scenario:

1. Parallels Desktop is running as a service.
2. The Mac user opens the Parallels Desktop application (the graphical user interface) to change some setting or to look at the virtual machine window.

3. The user then closes the virtual machine window. Depending on the virtual machine startup and shutdown settings (see **Configuring Virtual Machines to Run in the Background** (p. 7)), it will be either kept running in the background, suspended, stopped, or a message will be displayed to the user asking what to do.

4. Suppose the message above is displayed and the user clicks **Keep Running** to keep the virtual machine running in the background. If the user then closes the Parallels Desktop application and the **Disable Resume for Parallels Desktop** option is cleared, the virtual machine may be suspended or stopped depending on the OS X system preferences settings. This can happen regardless of the virtual machine startup and shutdown settings or the user input. The Mac OS X system setting that control this behavior can be found in **System Preferences** > **General** > **Closing windows when quitting an application**.



This option is disabled by default in OS X 10.7 and enabled in OS X 10.8. The **Disable Resume for Parallels Desktop** option, when selected, overrides this OS X setting for Parallels Desktop (other OS X applications are not affected). Therefore, if you don't want your virtual machines to be suspended or stopped, you should either disable the **Closing windows when quitting an application** setting in OS X preferences or select the **Disable Resume for Parallels Desktop** option in Parallels Desktop preferences.

4 Restart the Parallels Desktop application to start the Parallels Desktop service.

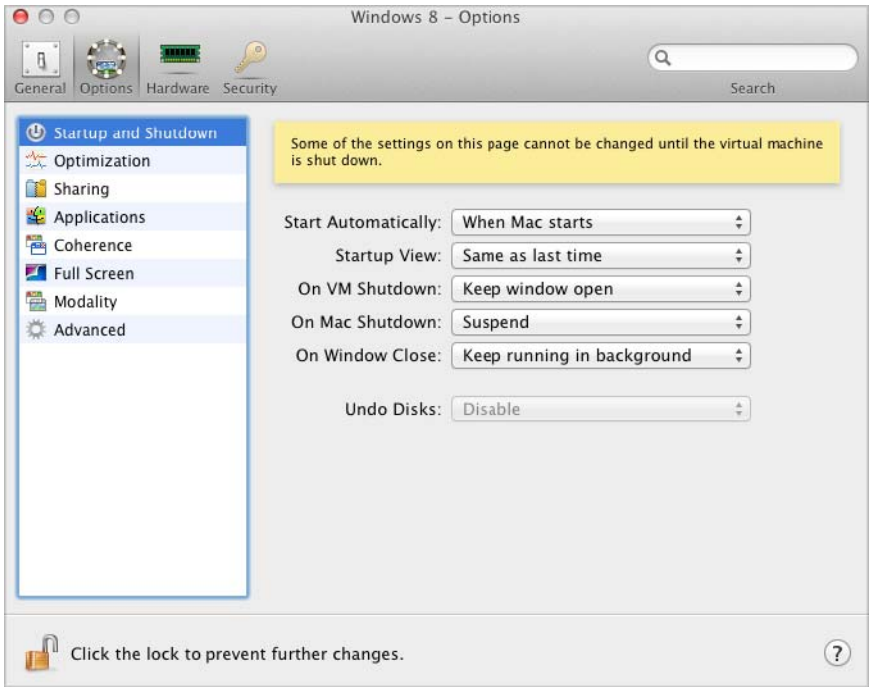
You now need to configure your virtual machines to run in the background. The following section describes how to do it.

Configuring Virtual Machines to Run in the Background

To configure a virtual machine to run in the background, follow these steps:

1 In the Parallels Desktop menu bar, click **Virtual Machine** and then click **Configure**.

2 Click **Options** and then select **Startup and Shutdown**.



3 In the **Start Automatically** menu, select **When Mac starts**. This tells the Parallels Desktop service to start the virtual machine automatically when Mac OS X starts.

4 In the **On Mac Shutdown** menu, select **Suspend**. This tells the Parallels Desktop service to suspend the virtual machine when the Mac is shut down or restarted.

5 In the **On Windows Close** menu, select **Keep running in background** (or **Ask me what to do** if you want a dialog displayed when you close the virtual machine window). This way the virtual machine will not be accidentally shut down or suspended when you open and close its window while Parallels Desktop is running as a service.

6 Set the rest of the options according to your usual preferences.

7 Close the virtual machine preferences window and start the virtual machine.

You may now close the virtual machine window and the Parallels Desktop application. This will only close the graphical user interface. The Parallels Desktop service and the virtual machines will continue to run in the background (provided the virtual machines and Parallels Desktop were configured correctly as described in this and previous sections of this guide).

Setting Autostart Delay

To set an automatic startup delay for a virtual machine, use the following command line syntax:

prlctl set *ID|name* **--autostart-delay** *number*

where:

- *ID|name* is the virtual machine ID or name.
- *number* is the startup delay in seconds.

If you have multiple virtual machines with no autostart delay set, they will start concurrently when you start or restart the host computer. By using the autostart delay you can reduce the load on the host during startup. The autostart delay option can also be helpful when one or more virtual machines depend on a service running in another virtual machine. By setting the autostart delay option for virtual machines, you can ensure that the virtual machine providing the service is up and running before the other virtual machines are started.

Managing Parallels Desktop Running as a Service

You can manage the Parallels Desktop service using `launchctl`, the standard OS X command line utility that allows to manage daemons, applications, processes, etc. The name of the Parallels Desktop service is `com.parallels.desktop.launchdaemon`. See usage examples below.

Examples of using launchctl:

To see if the Parallels Desktop service is running:

```
$ sudo launchctl list | grep parallels
8421  -   com.parallels.desktop.launchdaemon
```

To stop the Parallels Desktop service:

```
$ sudo launchctl stop com.parallels.desktop.launchdaemon
```

To start the service

```
$ sudo launchctl start com.parallels.desktop.launchdaemon
```

If Parallels Desktop is running as a service and you want to change the Parallels Desktop or a virtual machine preferences (or you simply want to see a virtual machine window), you can open the Parallels Desktop application (the graphical user interface) at any time by double-clicking the Parallels Desktop icon. While the application is running, you can work with it as usual. When you are done, you can close the virtual machine window and the Parallels Desktop application. The Parallels Desktop service will keep running in the background. The virtual machine will keep running if configured to do so (described in the previous sections of this document).

You can also view and modify Parallels Desktop and virtual machine settings using the standard Parallels Desktop command line tools. This may be helpful if you can't access the Mac directly (e.g. it is located in a different building, it doesn't have a monitor and keyboard, etc.). Simply connect to the Mac using SSH (or some other client) and use the `prlsrvctl` utility to manage Parallels Desktop and `prlctl` utility to manage virtual machines. The documentation for both utilities is included with Parallels Desktop and is available via command line.

If Parallels Desktop is running as a service and you want to change it to run as an application, open the Parallels Desktop application (by double clicking the Parallels Desktop icon) and modify the **Start Parallels Desktop as a service** option as described in the previous section. Restart the Parallels Desktop application for the changes to take effect.

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