

Lesson 1: Three Basic Chords: Em, E & Am

Your Mission: Learn how to finger these three chords and how to switch between them comfortably.

Below and to the right, you see a Chord Diagram for a chord called **E Minor**, abbreviated **Em**. This is the easiest to play of the most common guitar chords. The diagram includes:

- (1) Vertical lines that indicate the strings;
- (2) Horizontal lines that indicate the fret wires;
- (3) A thicker line at the top that shows the nut;
- (4) The letter **O** above the open strings; and
- (5) Circled numbers that indicate fingers, namely:

- 1 Index Finger
- 2 Middle Finger
- 3 Ring Finger
- 4 Little Finger

This diagram tells you to use your 2nd and 3rd fingers to hold down both the 5th and 4th strings at the 2nd fret, and you are supposed to play all 6 strings.

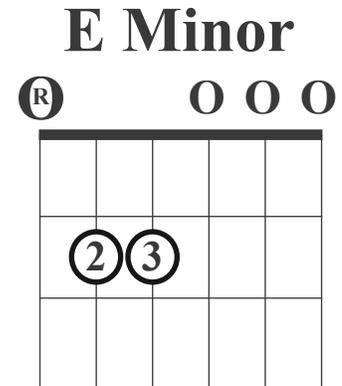
Now, play the same chord using the 1st and 2nd fingers. You would choose one form over the other depending on what other chord you may be **coming from** or **going to**.

- (1) Arch your fingers to avoid muting open strings.
- (2) Keep them as close to the fret wire as possible, where the contact will be strongest and the note will ring out most clearly.

(3) This chord is named after the **E note** because it has the strongest presence in the chord. The deepest note in the chord, the open 6th string, is an **E note**, and it's called the **Root Note** of the chord (the "**R**") because it holds up the rest of the chord like a root holds up a plant.

(4) All things being equal, we prefer to hear the lowest **Root Note** in the bass region of a chord, so you should sound all 6 strings when you strum the **Em** chord.

(4) The term **Minor Chord Quality** refers to the heavy, melancholy feeling that the **Em** chord projects.



Let your pick or thumb glide over the strings in this direction, from the 6th string to the 1st.

