The Rest of the Book

The rest of this book is about chords: how to finger them and how to change back and forth between them. Playing chords is probably the most important thing that guitarists do. Most instruments can play only a single note at a time, while the guitar can play up to 6 notes at once, providing a chordal accompaniment to a singer or to another instrument. Of course, the guitar can also play single-note melodies and improvisations, which we'll discuss in *Guitar From Scratch: The Sequel*, but even those lead lines depend on some kind of a chordal backdrop.

So everyone needs to learn chords.

Chords and Chords

Harmony is the blending of different notes into chords. The notes in these chords can be **strummed** all at once or they can be played as **arpeggios** (from the word "harp"), or broken chords, where single notes are played in a sequence.

But our first task is to get the left hand, the **fretting** hand, into shape. We need to deal with the mechanics of simply holding down the notes before we can get very far with the right hand, the **picking** hand. I say this because some students want to get right into complex arpeggio and strum patterns before they can even get all the notes in the chord to ring right. This can lead to remorse.

I want to introduce the most basic chords to you one at a time and start showing you right away what your options are in changing back and forth among them. If you like, skip ahead to page 53 to see a summary (that is, if you don't mind spoiling the surprise).

So let's get down to it. Below and to the right, you see a Chord Diagram for a chord that is called **E Minor**, abbreviated **Em**. This is the easiest of the most common chords to finger. The components of this diagram are:

- (1) Vertical lines that represent the strings;
- (2) Horizontal lines that represent the fret wires;
- (3) A thicker line that represents the nut;
- (4) The letter "O" over the open strings; and
- (5) Circles containing numbers that tell you which fingers to use to hold down which strings at which frets.

Index finger (pointer, forefinger) is "1," Middle finger is "2," Ring finger is "3," Little finger is "4." (The Thumb is "T.")

This diagram tells you to use your 1st and 2nd fingers to hold down the 5th and 4th strings, both at the 2nd fret, and you get to play all 6 strings. [Play chord now!]

