

Now that you've tried the **Em** chord, several Principles of Guitar Playing come to mind:

**Principle #1: Arch your fingers.** Make sure that all the joints in your fingers are curved. This gives you the best chance of getting the very *tippy* tips of your fingertips to come down at right angles onto the strings. In the **Em** chord, if you don't come straight down, your 2nd finger may accidentally brush up against the 3rd string and muffle that open note. Phht.

**Principle #2: Stay as close to the fret wire as possible.** We already talked about this with regard to tuning, but a slight problem arises when you finger the **Em** chord. The 2nd finger gets to snug right up to the 2nd fret wire, but the 1st finger is forced back away from it, as in the diagram to the right.

This situation leads to another principle:

**Principle #3: Press harder the farther back from the fret wire you are forced to set your finger.** For **Em**, the situation isn't nearly as crowded as it can be for some other chords.

Coupla things: (1) It's called "**E**" Minor because the E note (on the open 6th and 1st strings) is the strongest-sounding note in the chord. Clearly there are other notes in the chord (G and B notes, specifically) but somehow the E note really stands out; it is called the **Root Note** because it holds up the rest of the chord the way a root holds up a plant.

(2) And the chord is said to have a **Minor Chord Quality**, which means that it sounds melancholy, heavy, sort of sad.

Again, the 6th, 5th and 4th strings are known as the **bass** (lower-pitched) strings, while the 3rd, 2nd and 1st strings are known as the **treble** (higher-pitched) strings. An issue that will come up for every chord that we discuss will be: *What is the lowest-pitched bass string that we favor for a given chord?* Naturally, there's a principle for this:

**Principle #4: We often prefer to hear the Root Note of the chord in the bass.** For **Em** it's a simple situation: We want to hear the open 6th string, since it bears the E note. What could sound mightier than the deepest note on the entire guitar acting as the Root Note in its own chord? Not much, I guess.

(I put an "R" in the above diagram at the lowest Root Note.)

So when you play **Em**, you can play *all six* strings. (You'll see shortly that this is not the case with most other chords.) Hey, here's a little exercise: Strum the **Em** chord 4 times and then strum the Chord With No Name shown next to it 4 times. (Just spread your two fingers apart, moving by one string in opposite directions, and let all 6 strings ring.) Repeat.

Does this sound like a '70s hit song? By the band America? Something about a desert?

