



## The letter ß (eszet)



The eszet (S-Z) is a special "S", not a "B". Germans call it "scharfes S" (a sharp s). The sound is like in "sand" (the same word is pronounced in German like "zund"). It is used in Germany and in Austria, but not in Switzerland.

In 1996 the German spelling was reformed to make the spelling more logical. The S-Z shows you how a word should be pronounced. Before we start with further explanations, we want you to know how to write it:



The reform did not abolish the S-Z, it simply made sure that its use makes more sense. The S-Z sound can also be produced with "ss". So, when to use which?

 +  = **SS**  
short vocal before S-Z sound      **Example:** Schloss (castle)      **Listen here:** <http://tinyurl.com/yzw7ee2>

 +  = **ß**  
long vocal before S-Z sound      **Example:** Straße (street)      **Listen here:** <http://tinyurl.com/ykwjkj9>

**If you do not have a German keyboard** you can use the virtual keyboard, or the ASCII CODE. In case you do not have the ASCII CODE at hand, or you have to fill in a form by hand, you are allowed to modify the letters according to the system that we show you right here. Please use these modifications only if you really have no chance to write the letters correctly:

letter	ASCII	spelling modification (e.g. for forms)
ß	# 223	ss
ä	# 228	ae
Ä	# 196	Ae/AE
ö	# 246	oe
Ö	# 214	Oe/OE
ü	# 252	ue
Ü	# 220	Ue/UE

Please note, the modifications only work into one direction. SS cannot become ß, AE is not by default Ä.

**Herzlichen Glückwunsch! You have mastered an essential piece of German grammar!**  
(Congratulations!)