Rules for the spelling of ss and ß

If the s sound follows a long (tense) vowel, then the s sound is spelled with ß.
Examples of long vowels followed by ß: *(Hint: Listen to native speakers to hear the difference between **long** and **short** vowels.)*

Fuß, Füße *(feet, feet)*	die Soße *(sauce, dressing)*	begrüßen *(to greet)*	stoßen *(to shove, push)*
die Größe *(size)*	die Straße *(street, highway)*	Spieß *(skewer)*	groß *(large, tall)*

If the s sound follows a diphthong, then the s sound is spelled with ß.
Examples of diphthongs followed by ß: *(Hint: Look for the following spellings to identify diphthongs: **ai, ei, au, eu, äu**)*

äußern *(to utter, speak)*	heiß *(hot)*	scheußlich *(terrible)*	außer *(except for)*
Fleiß *(industiousness)*	Strauß *(bouquet)*	du weißt *(you know)*	preußish *(Prussian)*

If the s sound follows a short (lax) vowel, then the s sound is spelled with ss.
Examples of short vowels followed by ss: *(Hint: Listen to native speakers to hear the difference between **short** and **long** vowels.)*

die Nässe *(wetness)*	die Schüssel *(bowl)*	*messen (to measure)*	hassen *(to hate)*
der Sessel *(armchair)*	passen *(to fit)*	*es muss (it needs to)*	vergessen *(to forget)*

Old rules that have been abandoned

In the old system, before the spelling reform took place, there were additional rules that now no longer apply.

Double s -ss- at the end of a word used to contract to ß. Now this rule is obsolete.

old	new	reason
Haß *(hatred)*	Hass	
muß *(have to)*	muss	The preceding vowel is short.
schoß *(shot)*	schoss	New spelling is according
Roß *(steed, horse)*	Ross	to pronunciation.
daß **(that)**	dass	
Fuß	Fuß	No change, vowel is long.
heiß	heiß	No change, vowel is diphthong.

Double s -ss- before a consonant used to contract to ß. Now this rule is obsolete.

old	new	reason
er läßt *(he lets, makes, has)*	er lässt	
du mußt *(you need to)*	du musst	The preceding vowel is short.
sie ißt *(she is eating)*	sie isst	New spelling is according
hat…gewußt *(knew)*	hat…gewusst	to pronunciation.
sie haßt *(she hates)*	sie hasst	
das heißt	das heißt	No change, vowel is diphthong.
du stößt	du stößt	No change, vowel is long.