

<p>AF Nikkor 105 mm f/2 DC</p>	<p>5 (D1X, D70)</p> <p>5 (D2X)</p> <p>4.5-5 (FX: D3X)</p>	<p>The 105/2 is the shortest of the two Nikkors offering a defocus control (DC) feature, and possibly a better performer than the longer 135/2 DC. In fact, the 105 DC gives a true stellar optical performance and is one of the finest Nikkors ever made. It comes in a professional-looking crinkle finish and the construction is metal rather than plastics - thank you, Nikon. However, all numerals and lettering on its barrel are just printed, not engraved, which is a pity considering the elevated price this lens commands.</p> <p>Its optical design includes rear element (RF) focusing, which is a special case of internal (IF) focusing, so the length of the lens won't change while it is focused. The near limit is 0.9 m, which allows for tightly composed shots. AF operation is fairly quick but not noise-free. As manual focusing is fast and easy thanks to a generously-sized focusing collar, the AF performance isn't an issue at all and focusing the lens manually probably will be the preferred option (at least, for me). In common with other high-speed lenses, the 105/2 DC snaps positively into focus. You can be assured of high-quality imagery even at f/2, and from f/2.8-f/4 picture quality is stunning. Beyond f/5.6 performance begins to decline, so this is clearly a lens built for speed. Across the entire aperture range, image contrast is high and colours are vividly rendered. The RF system, however, may introduce slight colour fringing in highlights outside the focused zone. Many IF lenses exhibit this trait.</p> <p>There is a sliding-out sunshade which, fortunately, can be screwed firmly into place. Be aware though that the threads are finely pitched and the hood occasionally gets stuck in the locked position. The lens has a 72 mm filter size which is at variance with the current 77 mm standard for the Nikon professional lens line, but the smaller size does keep the lens more compact. The front element is deeply recessed and the propensity for lens flare is low. Even under adverse light situations there is virtually no ghosting either, so this is a perfect lens for available-light shooting. The superb optical performance at wide aperture settings helps in this respect, too. Geometric distortion is virtually non-existent, a desirable trait if you are into architectural photography or suchlike applications.</p> <p>The DC feature actually is a user-controllable over- or undercorrection of residual spherical aberration in the out-of-focus zones. A rotating collar adjacent to the focusing ring allows setting DC to operate in front of, or to the rear of, the plane on which the lens is focused. In conjunction with a nicely rounded aperture opening, this allows the bokeh of the image to be precisely managed. If the DC setting coincides with the selected aperture, nicely glowing highlights and pleasingly smooth images are obtained, but still a biting sharpness is present in the image. You can go one further by maxing out the DC setting to get very visible softening of the non-focused areas. This depends on using quite wide apertures because the deliberately introduced spherical aberration is largely eliminated when the lens is stopped well down. The best effects are obtained in the f/2 to f/5.6 range. It is difficult to envision the optical effects from defocusing the image unless you practice this for a while. Each alteration of the DC setting demands refocusing the lens so operating the 105/2 in DC mode can be cumbersome for the novice user.</p> <p>I just recently acquired this lens, but it has quickly become one of my favourite lenses on D1X. For my own shooting with the 105/2, I tend to work with the defocus control switched off. However, DC is a nifty feature when the need for it arises, such as in portraiture, and being incorporated in the lens design, DC is literally at your fingertips, with no extras needed.</p> <p>On the super-high resolution D3X, you need to get the focus perfect otherwise you'll see a lot of red or green fringing. I've downrated this lens a little with this camera since its flaws are more visible and you really need to stop down to f/4-f/5.6 to get bitingly sharp images.</p>
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