

Conclusion - Pros

- Extremely even image quality across the frame, even on FX
- Improved image quality over 50mm F1.4D at large apertures
- Exceptional image quality when stopped down
- Essentially no lateral chromatic aberration
- Near-silent AF-S focus with full-time manual override

Conclusion - Cons

- Slightly soft at large apertures
- Somewhat susceptible to flare
- Longitudinal (bokeh) chromatic aberration, most visible at large apertures
- Vignetting at large apertures on full frame (essentially disappears by F2.8)
- Slower autofocus than the screw-drive AF-Nikkor 50mm F1.4D

Overall conclusion

The AF-S Nikkor 50mm F1.4G was, at its introduction, hailed by Nikon as 'redefining the standard lens concept'. It turns out that in many ways that was no idle boast - in almost all respects the lens is clearly improved over its predecessor, the [AF-Nikkor 50mm F1.4D](#). It's sharper wide open, and provides much more even performance across the frame (especially on FX), with notably better corner sharpness at large and intermediate apertures. Both barrel distortion and vignetting are also lower, and the rendition of out-of-focus backgrounds is improved due to the circular aperture. The typical foibles of this type of fast prime - blue color-blur from residual spherical aberration, and color fringing in out-of-focus regions due to longitudinal chromatic aberration - are present, but not especially intrusive, and appear reduced compared to the older lens. As usual, they are also only visible at large apertures. The lens is somewhat susceptible to flare when shooting into the light, but this is far from unusual with fast primes. Overall in terms of optics, the 50mm F1.4G is sufficiently better than its predecessor (especially at large apertures) to make upgrading well worth considering.

If there's one small fly in the ointment, however, it's the fact that the new AF-S motor results in autofocus that is actually slightly slower than the screw-drive of the older lens. But against this must be weighed the benefits - the near-silent focusing will answer the prayers of anyone who wants their camera to be quiet in operation, and many will also appreciate the ability to tweak focus manually after AF. Also let's not forget that for owners of the D40, D40X, D60 or D5000, this lens becomes the first Nikon 50mm which will autofocus on their cameras at all.

Naturally many potential buyers will also be comparing the lens to Sigma's [50mm F1.4 EX DG HSM](#), and the choice between the two is far from straightforward. Both lenses are excellent, but with a different balance of strengths and weaknesses. In many regards, the answer therefore comes down to what format and application you're thinking of using the lens for. The Sigma performs a bit better at the largest apertures - it's sharper, especially in the middle of the frame, and the bokeh is more attractive - which makes it more appealing to users looking to use a fast 50mm as a short portrait lens on DX. But for anyone looking for the best possible image quality across the whole range of apertures, especially on FX, the Nikon is a hugely attractive option. Corner sharpness becomes distinctly better at apertures smaller than F2.8, and chromatic aberrations are lower; and at its sweet spot of F5.6 to F8, it's simply superb. It's also worth bearing in mind that the Nikon is considerably smaller and lighter than the Sigma, making it a more discrete and portable solution.

Essentially, with this lens Nikon has produced perhaps the best-balanced full-frame fast 50mm autofocus prime we've yet seen. It may not quite match the sharpness and clarity of the Sigma at F1.4, but it's still perfectly usable wide open, and once stopped down to F2.8 it's more than a match for anything else in its class. When used on the D3X in particular, it produces some of the most detailed, aberration-free images we've yet seen, and our test results suggest there's still plenty to spare for even higher resolution sensors. It's very good on DX too, and an attractive option as a short portrait lens. This all comes in a relatively small, lightweight package, at a price which, while higher than the older 50mm F1.4D, won't break the bank. All in all it's an excellent replacement for what was already a very good lens.

Detail	Rating (out of 10)
Build quality	8.5
Ergonomics & handling	8.5
Features	8.0
Image quality	8.5
Value	8.5

Highly Recommended



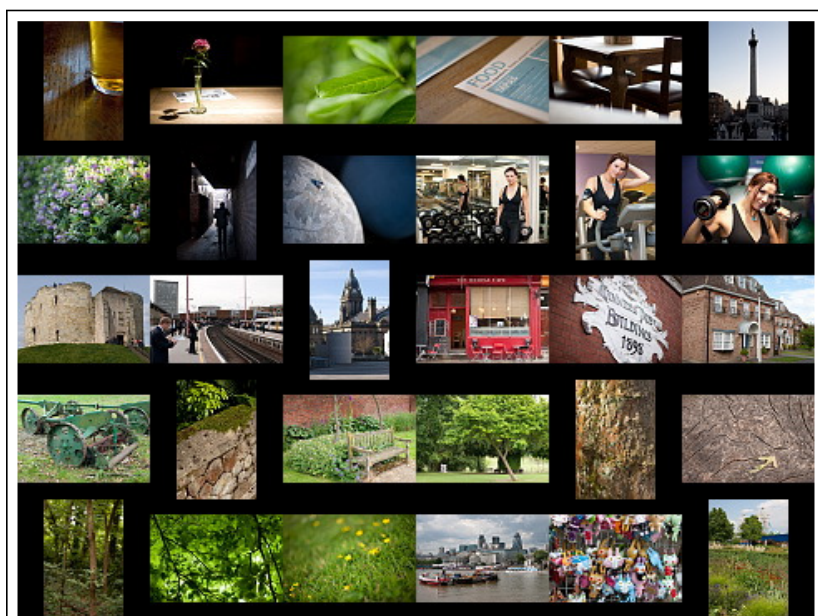
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Samples Gallery

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Unless **otherwise** noted images taken with no particular settings at full resolution. To provide the fairest impression of the lens itself, images are shot in RAW and converted using Adobe Camera Raw at default settings (to bypass the test cameras' automatic JPEG chromatic aberration correction). A reduced size image (within 1024 x 1024 bounds) is provided to be more easily viewed in your browser. As always the original untouched image is available by clicking on this reduced image.



Nikon AF-S Nikkor 50mm 1:1.4G Samples Gallery - Posted 19th June 2009