

**Additional Information on
Nikon's AF Nikkor 85mm f/1.8D medium telephoto lenses**

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2nd draft edited on 16.07.2007

Nikon AF-Nikkor 85mm f/1.8D short telephoto lens

Marketed 1994; Discontinued: ~ Still a current model as at 2006

In the fall of 1994, Nikon has introduced a series of four new AF Nikkor lenses which integrated with a distance encoding chip inside. Other than an AF-I Nikkor 500mm f/4.0D ED IF super telephoto which was designed as an original lens type, the remaining group which comprised of an AF Nikkor 85mm f/1.8D, [AF Nikkor 20mm f/2.8D](#) and [AF Nikkor 28mm f/2.8D](#) were simply an updated version where previous AF versions were used as the basis for the AF-D upgrades.



AF-D from the exact old lens model ?
Yeap sounds bad huh ? well, if you are not happy with this, that is fine with Nikon as they can't be bother how you felt. But for photographers who thinks 3D Matrix Metering was simply one feature he couldn't live without for his photography - these AF-D updates were here to serve such needs. Overall, the updates had enabled a broader scope Nikon/Nikkor system compatibilities in a few areas. However, NOT all Nikon SLR cameras introduced thus far can enjoy all the additional benefits it brought but for most Nikon SLR bodies introduced after the Nikon F90 Series, the AF-D lenses may justify an investment consideration because AF-D Nikkor lenses do enabled the full potential of a corresponding Nikon camera to deliver their best where such combination offers the most advance prevailing technologies during this period in areas such as autofocusing, metering and exposure control which even extends to flash photography.

<<<--- I took a front page entry photo of this autofocus Nikkor 85mm f/1.8D lens for the [Nikon F5 site](#). As I remembered those days, when [Nikon F3](#) was launched, it has used a picture which mounted with a Nikkor 85mm f/2.0 for the launching advertisement back in 1980 too. I did that for fun - juts to replicate the same feel of it.

And in view of other possibilities in the future, such as if you have already owned or intend to go with a new acquire of a Nikon film or digital SLR body in near future; investing into an AF-D Nikkor optic may be a sensible move. This mentioned scenario earlier may be applicable beginning from end of the first quarter of the '90 towards the millennium but after the [Nikon F5](#) was introduced, where Nikon cameras had followed footsteps of Canon's EOS / EF system by eliminating the need of manual aperture control on the lens. Technically, the move had reflected Nikon acknowledgment of Canon original effort was more superior. However, don't let this quote dampen your high spirit as a Nikonian, because in many ways Nikon 35mm photographic system still has its edge over rivalries in many areas and more importantly, photography is not all about technologies as creativeness of individual in photography plays a more important element. Having the latest trend in place in your camera / lens combination is HELPFUL but does not necessarily mirrors in a creative image capture process. But what I was trying to convey here is how the changes have affected general consumers like us. And when you realize what you have invested into a while ago all of a sudden it has some compatible issue to catch up possibly with new Nikon from now, that is certainly not a very nice feeling to along with, right ?

While rushing to Shanghai in a morning, took a puff outside Bangkok new Suvarnabhumi airport, the side walk cafe at the lower floor looked nice in the morning side lighting..



leofoo®™,
2006



Credit: Images courtesy of shutterblade.com where the Company has a [EBAY STORE](#) on its own. For those who may be new to the Nikon system and keep worrying you might be buying an older 85mm f/1.8, don't be. Although whether the AF 85mm is an AF-D or non-D version or not - optically both should behave and deliver the same quality (EXCEPT for a fact, where we assume all newer versions should be treated with Nikon's SIC (super Integrated lens Coating Process) where majority of the older ones could be just being treated with NIC (Nikon Integrated Coating). If you are very determine to find out the differences, an easy identification of the newer AF-D version has an inscription of an additional alphabet "D" behind the lens data, i.e. it reads 85mm 1:1.8D on the lens tube and at the inner filter ring as 1:1.8D. Next, another way is to locate the minimum aperture lock, the newer AF-D version simply has a slide switch to lock the aperture, whereas the previous non-D model has an older twist-lock design. Note: the location of both of these are located at the end (right hand side) of the aperture ring, marked with an orange colored mark.



Naturally, the earlier mentioned difference of respective lens coating is not visible nor having any visual identification aid. The last is the serial number identification (refer to lens spec section below). Well, it is unlikely a camera dealer will play a cheat with AF-D and older model, as all they want is to ensure your \$\$ in your pocket is "transferred" to his as quickly as he can, so he doesn't need to do this to create a scam.

Even though it was simply a remake from the older model, I feel this AF-D 85mm short telephoto inherits with Nikon long tradition of a good lens design. It is quite weighty but the weight factor has projected a rigid and solid feel. Despite the slight increase in lens speed from the [manual focus Nikkor 85mm f/2.0S](#), the diameter of the front lens element is considered to be quite a large piece (The filter thread is a non-rotating with a 62mm diameter size). The lens barrel with the focusing window still present some traces of a plasticity feel in this AF-D update but it is not as distinguishable as with many of those early Nikkor autofocus lenses introduced back in the mid '80. I guess Nikon probably had took some measures and good consideration with the choice of material in these few areas to improve the quality aspect.

Optical performance of this AF-D 85mm meets expectation



Credit: Roman Foxman®™ 2006

Similarly, the $f/16$ minimum aperture could have been stopped down to $f/22$ to extend the depth of field control usage. Similar to the predecessor, the closest focus distance remains at 0.85m where the magnification ratio is approx. 1/9.2X and this provides a less desirable close up usage (you should consider the alternate [Micro-Nikkor 105mm f/2.8D](#) if your personal preference is on macro-photography; in 1999, Nikon has also introduced an alternate consideration at this specific focal length of 85mm as the Micro-Nikkor lens family has a new member with the [PC Micro-Nikkor 85mm f/2.8D](#) which makes Nikon having the most extensive in lens type selection at this specific focal length). But still, the fixed focal length AF-D 85mm $f/1.8$ tele-lens offers its own advantage in many areas such as portability and versatility, you can make use the shorter focal length for head and shoulder or half length body portraiture in confined areas (such as studio or on location shots etc.), scenic, nature, street photography, candid in cafe or on locations, sports, journalism etc. Well, you can go for a wide-tele or telephoto zoom lens if you like, but as most zoom lenses have slower opening aperture and even a top quality AF Nikkor zoom lenses may only offer a maximum aperture of $f/2.8$ and this makes the prime 85mm with a fixed lens speed of $f/1.8$ more versatile. Well, not to mention it can be a world of difference when it matters most when deal with low light shooting in a more stable manner. Lastly, I may be a old fashion photographer but I always carry the belief focal length to focal length, prime is always triumph when a comparing zoom lens is used.

of how a top rated Nikkor lens behaves. Images captured always are very crisp and sharp. Contrast range is consistent throughout but slightly on the high side. Well, with a proper subject topic where generally in a typical telephoto lens, it is always very eye appealing with resulting captured images - in particularly when you know how to combine its native optical characteristic and supplement them with good lighting, colour element in the pictures, composition and other desirable picture elements. As mentioned at earlier section, short telephoto lens can be used in a wide spectrum of picture usage, you can simply treated it as a long standard lens or a short telephoto. It extends to digital imaging such as using the versatile ASA adjustment, the $f/1.8$ maximum aperture literally permits you to handle subjects down to minus a few EV. One of the technical highlight mentioned by Nikon was the built-in rear focus optical system where Nikon claims it has improved the focusing considerably and enables it to be more responsive. The camera driven AF system has slight noise level with my Nikon F5 but that is not a big issue. The conservatively marked depth of field scales of $f/16$ and $f/11$ could have been designed better with some additional mid aperture settings.

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Grapes

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Technical Specification for AF Nikkor 85mm f/1.8D short telephoto lens:-

Type of lens: Autofocus/Manual focus Nikkor fixed focal length lens with built-in CPU and Nikon bayonet mount
Focal length: 85mm; **Maximum aperture:** $f/1.8$; **Minimum Aperture:** $f/16$
Lens construction: 6 elements in 6 groups; **Diaphragm:** Fully automatic,
Picture angle: $28^{\circ}30'$ (35mm); $18^{\circ}50'$ Nikon DX digital SLR format cameras (approx. 127mm)
Distance scale: Graduated in meters and feet/inches from 0.85m (36") to infinity (∞); visible via concealed plastic distance scales window.
Distance information: Output into camera body with CPU interface system; 3D Matrix metering for ambient and flash exposure control **fully enabled**
Focusing: Camera driven AF system; manual focusing via manual focusing ring
Aperture scale: $f/1.8$ to $f/16$ on both standard and aperture-direct-readout scales
Metering Coupling Prong: -none **Depth of Field Scales:** provided for $f/11$, $f/16$ only
Usable Nikon SLR cameras: Manual (Ai-spec); Autofocus and Digital Nikon SLR models



Reproduction ratio: 1:9.2X maximum

Minimum aperture lock: Provided, slide switch and lock type

Lens Coating: SIC (Nikon's Super integrated Coating)

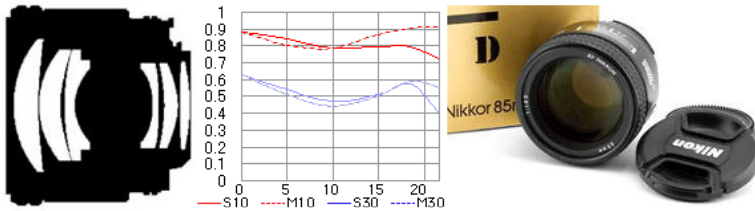
Filter Rotation: NO; **Infra Index:** Provided; **No. of diaphragm:** 9 blades

Exposure measurement: Via full-aperture method for Ai cameras or cameras with CPU interface system; Distance info relaying system

Mount: Nikon bayonet mount with CPU contacts; **Attachment size:** 62mm (P=0.75mm)

Dimensions: Approx. 71mm x 58.5mm (69mm from the flange)

Weight: Approx. 414g



Supplied accessories: Screw in HN-23 metal hood, snap on front lens cap (62mm), rear lens cap LF-1. **Optional accessories:** Lens case CL-15S; Other info: Circular polarizing filter: Usable; Circular polarizing filter II: Usable (also with dedicated Lens Hood HN-23); AF-3: Usable. (2); AF-4 Usable. (4); Indicates maximum number of usable hoods (HN-36 for AF-3/HN-37 for AF-4):

Usable teleconverters: [TC-201S](#), [TC-14AS](#); **Other information:**- Serial numbers: 300001 < 301768 > > *Reference:* Roland Vink's [lens data sheet](#).