

AF-S VR Zoom-Nikkor 70-200mm f/2.8G ED-IF lens review

General

[This](#) and [this](#) essay contains a lot of photographs taken with this lens.

Links to other reviews of this lens can be found [here](#).

Explanations of the terms below can be found [here](#).



Handling

Built quality of the lens is as good as it gets. As you would expect from an AF-S lens, auto focus is blissfully silent and fast. Nothing to be added here.

This is a G-type lens, which means that it does not have an aperture ring. As far as I am concerned, this is not a problem whatsoever as I have been using Nikon auto-focus cameras all along and control aperture settings via in-camera dial anyway. I normally do not even notice that there *are* aperture rings on other Nikkor lenses that I use!

The new (detachable) tripod collar is a huge improvement over previous models and *significantly improves* handling when hand-holding the camera with the lens attached as the collar simply does not get in the way if/when you remove it. I personally find new ergonomics far superior to previous designs, too. Zoom ring is smaller in diameter and is located further away from the camera plane, thus very naturally and conveniently falling in between your thumb and index finger when you uphold the lens from beneath. The lens, however, is a bit longer than its predecessors. This is not a problem per se but I had to buy a new camera bag because of this.

VR can not be activated by pressing AF-ON button at the back of the camera. This is perfectly fine with me as I use shutter release button to active auto focus; some people find this quite problematic, though.

Vibration Reduction (VR)

As you will read elsewhere, VR does indeed work. As promised by Nikon, you can use shutter speeds three stops slower than you would normally employ. VR function, however, reduces *camera* shake and does not take care of subject movement.

My impression is that VR allows one to get *reasonably* sharp images at slower-than-usual shutter speeds. To get the sharpest images the lens can deliver one still needs to use either faster shutter speeds or a tripod. VR is truly superb but do not expect miracles here.

VR obviously takes time to kick in and one thing that I noticed right away was that this function increases shutter lag quite noticeably. With the lens attached to a Nikon F100 and VR on, I feel as if I shoot with a Nikon F80.

Sharpness

This lens is sharp, sharp, sharp! My perception is that it actually is a tiny - yet visible and pleasant - bit sharper than the venerable [AF Zoom-Nikkor ED 80-200mm f/2.8D](#). At f/2.8 and f/16 the lens, of course, is insignificantly softer, but then again, is there a lens that is different in this respect?

Light fall-off

I do not use the word "hate" easily but I have to say that I do hate light fall-off. Among lens aberrations it is, in my opinion, the most obviously visible and irritating one. When using a zoom lens it is important for me to know at what aperture it disappears at different focal lengths so that I can control it efficiently.

This lens appears to have made a *huge* leap forward in this area and light fall-off is controlled much, much better than in the [AF Zoom-Nikkor ED 80-200mm f/2.8D](#). At first I could not believe that at 200mm the aberration is entirely gone by f/5.6! The picture in the "Bokeh" section of this review was taken at f/4 and light fall-off is almost not noticeable!

My preliminary tests show that at all focal length settings light fall-off is practically not noticeable at f/4 and entirely gone by f/5.6.

My main problem with the [AF Zoom-Nikkor ED 80-200mm f/2.8D](#) was that in the 135-200mm range I had to stop the lens down to at least f/6.7 to get images with no noticeable light fall-off. This often made it very difficult to hand-hold the camera and obtain sharp results in the ambient light. Now I can unreservedly shoot at f/4.8 and, of course, I also have the VR. Brilliant!

Distortion

The lens shows *very visible* barrel distortion at 70mm and 80mm and is *free from* distortion at about 105mm. It then starts exhibiting pincushion distortion. At 135mm it is noticeable but really insignificant; at 200mm it is a bit worse than at 135mm but quite acceptable for most purposes (see the photograph in the Bokeh section below). Generally, the lens appears to be better corrected for distortion at the longer end.

Flare and Ghosting

Some photographers have reported that flare and ghosting is probably the only serious flaw of this lens. I, however, have not had any problems with it so far.

Bokeh



As I wrote [here](#), bokeh is a rather subjective criterion (at least, I have not seen a definition or a measurement that would do better than "how out-of-focus areas look"). The photograph above was taken at 200mm and $f/4$ and shows a slightly-better-than-neutral bokeh. I am not posting the same picture taken at $f/5.6$ but bokeh does improve as you stop the lens down. Presuming that this is the general tendency (which is consistent with my experience with other lenses, too), I would conclude that this lens generally produces neutral to beautiful bokeh. See [this](#) essay for more bokeh examples.

Conclusions

This is a truly outstanding lens which incorporates great optics and state-of-the-art technologies (AF-S and VR). As with any lens, learn how it behaves at different focal length and aperture settings to obtain the best image quality possible.