

Conclusion - Pros

- Superb build quality with dust and moisture sealing
- Excellent image quality on DX format
- Effective optical image stabilization
- Excellent autofocus with manual override and AF stop buttons

Conclusion - Cons

- Less impressive performance on FX format - marred by soft corners and vignetting
- Somewhat susceptible to flare with direct light sources in or close to the frame
- Average close-up performance, especially at wide apertures

Overall conclusion

The Nikon AF-S VR 70-200mm F2.8G is a lens which would, were it designated 'DX', be fully deserving of the highest accolades. On the smaller sensor format, results are nothing short of spectacular - resolution is excellent even wide open, chromatic aberration and geometric distortion are low, and falloff negligible. Combine this with the impeccable build quality, excellent autofocus, and effective image stabilization, and this lens is getting close to flawless; only the occasional, but severe flare problems really count against it. And let's face it, this verdict applies for the overwhelming majority of current Nikon users, who will only be delighted with the performance of this lens on their DX crop cameras.

The problem is that, with the introduction of the D3, DX is no longer the pre-eminent format in Nikon's DSLR line, and 35mm full-frame has re-arisen from the ashes in the guise of FX. This of course places different demands on lenses, which now need to cover properly an image circle 43mm in diameter, as opposed to the 28mm of DX. And the D3 is a top-end camera, so it seems reasonable to assume that Nikon's workhorse professional lenses should give excellent results on it; sadly, the 70-200mm F2.8 VR doesn't quite manage this, with significant vignetting at wide apertures throughout the zoom range, and distinctly soft corners at longer focal lengths. The big problem here is that many D3 owners will likely need to use a fast telezoom on a daily basis, and for some, the 70-200mm VR's performance will simply not be up to scratch.

Now it's certainly arguable that a little corner softness and vignetting isn't necessarily a huge issue when it comes to telezooms; the corners of the frame are often outside the depth of field anyway, and a little vignetting can serve to 'frame' a portrait subject more effectively. Plus, the D3 now has vignetting correction as a firmware option, so can mitigate one of these issues to some extent (although at the price of slightly increased noise towards the corners of the frame). Unfortunately the big problem is that we're not dealing with just a little corner softness and vignetting, but a lot, and there's simply no way to sharpen up those soft corners.

So overall we're left with a lens which is a great option for most potential buyers, but simply isn't quite up to the demands of full frame capture. For anyone using the Nikon's DX format DSLRs, the incorporation of image stabilization alone means that it's the best option currently available, but FX shooters may well wish to think long and hard before buying.

Detail	Rating (out of 10) ON A DX CAMERA	Rating (out of 10) ON AN FX CAMERA
Build quality	9.0	9.0
Ergonomics & handling	8.0	8.0
Features	9.0	9.0
Image quality	9.0	8.0
Value	7.5	7.0



Highly recommended (for DX cameras)

Recommended (for FX cameras)

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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.

