

Tamron 180mm f/3.5 Di AF: Smooth operator

What you should know: Thanks to the popularity of Nikon and Canon's long 1:1 macro lenses, independents like Tamron are getting in the game with considerably less expensive versions.

Hands on: Length and substantial heft typical of lenses of this type. Well-done satin matte finish and superb fit. Big focusing ring with nubby rubber grip has excellent damping in manual focus. Outer ring allows you to spin a polarizer, grad, or other directional filter with the bayonet hood in place—a great idea. Windowed foot, meter, and magnification scales could be a bit more readable. Well-designed tripod collar has index mark for horizontal and vertical, removes easily. AF was about average in speed, and a little noisy.

In the lab: SQF excellent throughout, with minimal (0.45 percent) pincushion distortion.

Close focusing distance: 18.25 in. (1:1.02): Excellent center sharpness f/3.5–8, very good f/11, good f/16, acceptable f/22–32. Corners very good f/3.5–5.6, good f/8–16, below average f/22–32. Best overall at f/5.6.

In the field: Very sharp, contrasty test slides, center and corner, at all apertures except corners at f/32, which were slightly soft. Light falloff was gone by f/5.6.

Conclusion: Lovely handling, great performance at normal distances, quite sharp at close focusing except for weakness at smallest apertures. At \$500–\$650 less than camera makers' long macros, not a bad deal at all.



SPECIFICATIONS: 180mm (178.18mm tested), f/3.5 (f/3.46 tested), 14 elements in 11 groups. Focusing turns 150 degrees clockwise. **Diagonal View Angle:** 14 degrees. **Weight:** 2.1 lb. **Filter size:** 72mm. **Mounts:** Canon AF, Minolta AF, Nikon AF. **Included:** lenshood, soft case. **List price:** \$1,177. **Street price:** Approx. \$700.

SUBJECTIVE QUALITY FACTOR

1/8" Dia	A+	A	B+	B	C+	C	D	F
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Size	5x7	8x10	11x14	16x20	20x24
3.5	97.9	97.2	95.7	92.5	88.2
5.6	98.3	97.8	96.7	94.9	92.7
8.0	98.4	97.8	96.7	94.8	92.6
11.0	98.3	97.8	96.6	94.5	91.9
16.0	98.1	97.5	96.1	93.1	89.1
22.0	97.3	96.5	94.4	89.3	82.2
32.0	96.8	95.9	93.3	86.2	76.0