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## What is the best studio portrait lens

If you were to ask 100 professionals about the best lens for portrait photography, you would likely receive 100 different answers. There are so many options to choose from, and so many ways to shoot portraits, that it can be difficult to sort through all the information and find the lens that works for you. However, there are lenses that consistently rise to the top; they produce great results for anyone shooting portraits. They do vary greatly in terms of price, size, focal length, and even sheer practicality, but if you are looking for the perfect portrait lens, there will definitely be one on this list that offers exactly what you need. When determining the right portrait photography lens, it helps to first define what portrait photography means for you. Will you do headshots? Full-body portraits? Group shots? Candid portrait photos? Make sure to pick the lens that fits with your interests, rather than the interests of the average portrait photographer. A note about this list for people who are not familiar with portrait photography: Many of these are prime lenses, which means they only have a single focal length. This is different from kit lenses, which often have the capability to zoom in and out. So why go with a prime lens over a zoom? Primes offer a couple of key advantages: larger apertures to let in more light, and greater sharpness, too. For portrait photographers, the tradeoff is generally worth it, and while these lenses can be used for general-purpose photography, they really are well-suited for portrait sessions. Nikon D750 | Nikon 85mm f/1.8G | f/2.8 | 1/250s | ISO 450 1. Nikon 50mm f/1.8G The Nikon 50mm f/1.8G is far and away my top pick for beginners who want to get into portrait photography without spending a lot of money. The lens is tack sharp and focuses quickly, and the 50mm focal length is great for headshots, medium shots, and even wider shots with groups. The large f/1.8 aperture turns busy backgrounds into buttery smooth bokeh, and it works great in low-light situations, too. I have been shooting with this lens for nearly a decade and still bring it with me to portrait sessions because it just works so well. You can also find similar inexpensive lenses from Sony, Canon, and other manufacturers, so if you don't shoot with Nikon cameras, you can still pick up a 50mm f/1.8 lens for your camera at a great price. That said, I have used versions from other brands and tend to prefer the Nikon, but perhaps that's just my own personal bias; all of them do a great job with portraits and other photography situations, too. These 50mm lenses often don't include advanced features like weather sealing or metal construction, but if you keep your expectations in check and are just looking for an outstanding lens to shoot portraits without breaking the bank, this is the one to get. Pros Inexpensive; great price-to-performance ratioWell-built Very sharpAmazing upgrade choice for new photographers who want better portraits than what their kit lens can offer Cons Shooting wide open results in some unpleasant image artifacts like chromatic aberration and an overall drop in sharpnessFocusing ring feels a little cheap and stiff 2. Canon EF 85mm f/1.4L IS USM The Canon EF 85mm f/1.4L IS USM is revered among portrait photographers for its stunning sharpness as well as sheer versatility. It has long been a favorite of Canon shooters and with good reason: the 85mm focal length is great for headshots and medium shots, plus full-body and group photos, too. It's light, reasonably sized, and built to withstand the elements as well as some drops and falls. I know professional portrait photographers who use this lens exclusively, even over other options at their disposal like a 70-200mm f/2.8. One key advantage of this particular lens is its built-in image stabilization, which is exceptionally useful when handholding at slower shutter speeds. Even though the f/1.4 aperture can let in a massive amount of light and will therefore let you use fast shutter speeds in low light, I generally don't shoot portraits wide open because the depth of field is so tricky. You can easily shoot at 1/30s with this lens and capture sharp images (assuming your subjects are completely stationary!). There isn't really a one-size-fits-all solution when it comes to portrait lenses, but this one is pretty close. Pros Outstanding image qualityUltra-wide aperture increases overall versatility and lets you shoot in low-light situationsBuilt-in image stabilization lets you use slower shutter speedsGood weather sealing Cons Expensive compared to its f/1.8 counterparts, which produce great images at a much lower price point 3. Nikon AF-S 70-200mm f/2.8E FL ED VR The venerable 70-200mm f/2.8 lens has been a mainstay for many portrait photographers over the years, and this particular lens represents what is, in my opinion, the cream of the crop. There are plenty of other choices, including newer lenses from Nikon, Canon, and Sony that are specifically designed for mirrorless cameras, but this particular 70-200mm f/2.8 represents the pinnacle of lens construction for DSLR cameras. It's tack sharp at every aperture including wide open at f/2.8, it's designed to withstand years of daily use, and it has customizable buttons built right into the barrel so you can adapt the lens to your needs. Portrait photographers love 70-200mm f/2.8 lenses because they give outstanding results without many compromises. You can get headshots, full-body portraits, and entire group photos where everyone is in focus but the background is beautifully blurry. The wide f/2.8 aperture lets in enough light for fast shutter speeds in almost any situation, and most of these lenses (including this particular Nikon) have built-in image stabilization. If you shoot Canon, the Canon EF 70-200mm f/2.8L IS III USM lens is on par with this Nikon in virtually every respect, and while some nitpicky pixel-peepers might prefer one over the other, the truth is that they both deliver outstanding results. Pros Amazing image quality, even wide open at f/2.8This lens solves the "focus breathing" issue that plagued previous versions of the same lensSuited to portraits, but also great for sports, action, and wildlife Cons Very expensive, which puts it out of reach for casual portrait photographersHeavy; by the end of an hour-long session, your arms will feel like wet noodles 4. Sigma 40mm f/1.4 DG HSM | Art If you want something a little more interesting and unique, and are looking for a way to make your pictures stand out in a crowded field, this Sigma 40mm lens might be just the ticket. Its 40mm focal length is wider than every other lens on this list, perfect for photographers who prefer to let a little more into their field of view to get a unique look. It's razor sharp even wide open, and the f/1.4 aperture means you can get full-body shots while keeping the background nice and blurry. Autofocus is fast, though it's not quite comparable to other lenses like the Canon 85mm f/1.4, and this lens is a heavy beast that will give your arms a workout. The 40mm focal length results in a bit of distortion when shooting close-ups and headshots, but in locking down daily use, this wasn't a huge problem for me. Despite these drawbacks, there's almost an intangible beauty to this lens that's difficult to describe, which makes it wonderful for portraits as well as everyday shooting. I especially like how I can get several people in a shot for group portrait scenarios and still create a beautiful blurry background; at the end of the day, those results matter to me more than anything else. Pros Amazing sharpness, even wide open at f/1.4Good choice for daily use in mixed environments, not just portraitsSolid construction and an extra-large rubber grip around the focusing ring Cons Expensive; it shoots great photos, but you pay a premium40mm is good for portraits, but not as widely used as longer focal lengths like 85mmAutofocus is fine, but not as fast as some class-leading lenses 5. Canon EF 50mm f/1.2L USM This Canon 50mm f/1.2 lens was introduced in 2007 and has earned its place among the best portrait lenses for a very good reason: it has the widest aperture of any lens on this list, which means you can use it in extremely challenging situations with very little light. Plus, if you prefer ultra-shallow depth of field, you can't go wrong here. Its weather-sealing means you don't have to worry about moisture or dust ruining your shots, and autofocus is fast and reliable. Images are sharp, background blur is beautiful, and the lens is small enough to take anywhere. I hesitate to recommend this lens outright for portrait photography, because generally a 50mm f/1.8 lens will suit you just fine at a fraction of the cost. However, there are plenty of portrait shooters who swear by the 50mm focal length, and it's hard to beat this classic, simple lens. Canon does have a similar 50mm f/1.2 lens for their mirrorless cameras, but it is almost twice as expensive as this one. If you are new to portraits, a 50mm f/1.8 lens will work great, but if you want the best of what 50mm photography has to offer, this lens is at (or near) the very top. Pros Very small; can easily fit in any camera bagGreat for casual everyday shots in addition to formal portraitsExtra-wide f/1.2 aperture lets you shoot in low-light conditions and use very fast shutter speedsOutstanding sharpness and overall image quality, especially compared to less-expensive 50mm lenses Cons Very expensiveGreat for photographers who really like the 50mm focal length, but if you don't mind a smaller aperture, you can get similar (but not the same) performance with a much cheaper 50mm f/1.8 lens 6. Nikon 105mm f/1.4E ED In late 2016, Nikon unleashed the 105mm f/1.4E ED, which still stands head and shoulders above almost every other portrait lens on the market. It checks nearly every possible box a portrait photographer might have on their wishlist, and to this day, it is widely regarded as one of the best portrait lenses of all time. Its medium telephoto focal length of 105mm means you can get beautiful closeups without standing nose-to-nose with your subjects, and its incredible sharpness is the envy of many photographers. The insane f/1.4 aperture on this lens makes 70-200mm f/2.8 lenses weep, its autofocus is fast and reliable, and it even includes weather sealing so you can shoot in inclement weather. If you like photographing portraits with medium-telephoto focal lengths, you'll love the 105mm f/1.4. You can get stunning close-ups and beautiful medium shots, all with amazing sharpness and beautiful background blur. This performance doesn't come cheap, though, and you can't really use the Nikon 105mm f/1.4 for much besides portraits. It's too bulky for daily casual shooting, and the 105mm focal length is ill-suited for nature, sports, and most other types of photography. But if you want a no-compromise portrait lens, the kind that lets you get a subject's pupil in focus with the eyelashes blurry, this is the way to go. Pros Astonishing image quality; an ideal combination of focal length and large apertureCan be easily used on newer mirrorless Nikon cameras with no loss in image qualityExquisite background blurArtifacts such as chromatic aberration are well-controlled even at its widest aperture Cons Very expensive (though you get what you pay for!)Large and heavy82mm filter size means screw-on attachments like ND filters are also much more expensive 7. Sony FE 85mm f/1.4 GM In many ways, the Sony 85mm f/1.4 GM lens is a peer to other 85mm f/1.8 options – such as the excellent Canon earlier on this list – but has enough unique features to earn a spot for itself. Everything you might expect is here: exquisite sharpness, beautiful background blur, fast autofocus, and sealing against dust and moisture. However, this lens also includes a few extra features that certain portrait photographers will appreciate. The built-in focus lock button is great if you want to use the shutter button for focusing while instantly locking focus at a moment's notice (it essentially eliminates the need for back-button focus). Also, this lens has a ring that lets you change apertures manually right on the lens instead of using a control dial on your camera. The ring clicks on third-stop increments, but the sound can be disabled for those planning to shoot video. Pros 85mm focal length is versatile and highly useful for lots of portrait scenariosGood manual controls, including focus lock and apertureExcellent image quality Cons More expensive than similar 85mm lenses from Canon and NikonNo image stabilization, but most Sony cameras have in-body image stabilization 8. Canon RF 28-70mm f/2L USM Some portrait photographers prefer a wider field of view, and some like a lens that is a bit more narrow. Why not have one lens that does both? Most zoom lenses have too many tradeoffs to be taken seriously by portrait photographers, but Canon set out to solve that problem with this 28-70mm f/2 zoom lens. Built for Canon RF mirrorless cameras, this lens pushes past most of its peers thanks to the f/2 aperture instead of the f/2.8 aperture that is common for similar zoom lenses (albeit with the tiny sacrifice of 28mm at the wide end instead of 24mm). I tend to prefer longer focal lengths than what this lens offers, but just like the Sigma 40mm f/1.4, there are plenty of people for whom this lens is ideal. While the 28-70mm focal length essentially does the same work as two or three other lenses, its price is so high you could just purchase individual lenses instead. However, for an all-in-one workhorse, this lens is hard to beat. As you might expect, it is extremely sharp wide open at all focal lengths, has fast and reliable autofocus, and even sports a control ring that can be customized to change settings like aperture and ISO. If you shoot with Canon mirrorless cameras, like wider focal lengths, and want one lens to rule them all, this should be at the top of your list. Pros Incredible versatility thanks to the extra-large f/2 maximum aperture across the entire focal rangeBeautiful image quality at every focal length and apertureFast, reliable autofocusWeather-resistant construction Cons Very expensive; given the price of this lens, some photographers might prefer buying a few prime lenses, insteadMinimum focal length isn't as wide as the 24mm found on other lenses (however, 24-70mm lenses have smaller maximum apertures of f/2.8 instead of f/2) 9. Nikon Z 85mm f/1.8 S You might notice a pattern emerging on this list; after all, the Nikon Z 85mm f/1.8 is the third 85mm prime lens on here, which might seem redundant. Why not include other lenses with more varied focal lengths? Well, 85mm is the sweet spot for many portrait photographers, and when Nikon made this lens for their Z-mount mirrorless cameras, they took everything they had learned from their already-exceptional F-mount DSLR lenses and kicked it up a notch. It's got everything you would expect in a lens of this caliber and in this price range: sharp optics, solid construction, a massive grip for focusing, and good weather sealing – all in a package that isn't too big and won't weigh you down during long photo sessions. While it's true that the f/1.8 aperture isn't as wide as the Canon 85mm f/1.4 or Sony 85mm f/1.4, this lens is also much less expensive and gets the job done nearly as well. And f/1.8 lenses can still be used in low light and are capable of very shallow depth of field, even if it's not quite as shallow as its f/1.4 brethren. (For reference, I almost never shoot my Nikon 85mm lens wider than f/2 or f/2.4, since the depth of field is wafer-thin.) The 85mm f/1.8 doesn't have built-in image stabilization, but almost every Nikon mirrorless camera comes with that already, so you can get sharp shots at slow shutter speeds even with non-stabilized lenses. If you use Nikon Z-mount cameras and want a great portrait lens without breaking the bank, this is the one to get. Pros Excellent image quality even on high-megapixel cameras like the Nikon Z 7IIlMassive rubberized focus ring is easy to grip and rotate, and can also be assigned to adjust aperture or exposure compensationVery good autofocus is well-suited to photos and videos Cons Maximum f/1.8 aperture isn't as bright as some competing lenses that go to f/1.4 or f/1.2Some photographers prefer slightly smaller lenses 10. Tamron 70-210mm f/4 Di VC USD Portrait purists might balk at the inclusion of this final entry, but that's a mistake; the Tamron 70-210mm f/4 offers unreal value for the money, and it's an amazing choice for people who also works well for sports and wildlife, and who don't have a lot of money to spend. Available for several hundred – as opposed to several thousand – dollars, this beauty from Tamron lets you get almost the same level of performance as high-end 70-200mm f/2.8 lenses and even includes image stabilization and weather sealing. So what's the catch? For one, the maximum aperture of f/4 will frustrate plenty of professional portrait photographers. It's great if you have lots of light, but if you want a shallow depth of field or good low-light shots, you're out of luck. It's not a major drawback by any means, but it doesn't quite stack up against some of the more professional-oriented portrait lenses you can buy. This lens also isn't as sharp as its more expensive counterparts, especially in the corners, and build quality isn't as solid as other lenses, either. However, what this lens lacks in features it more than makes up for in price. You can easily capture client-worthy portraits with this lens, and if you are a new photographer looking to get a lot while spending a little, this lens deserves your consideration. Pros Inexpensive but still produces quality portraits70-210mm focal range is longer than competing lensesRespectable feature set including image stabilization High-quality construction Cons Image quality can't match the pixel-perfect sharpness of other lenses on this listThe f/4 aperture is limiting in low-light situationsAutofocus is good but not quite on par with other lenses Nikon D7100 | Nikon 50mm f/1.8G | f/2.8 | 1/180s | ISO 200 200 Best lenses for portrait photography: final words Those are my top picks for portrait lenses in 2022, and I hope this gives you several options to consider – whether you're new to portraiture or you're a seasoned professional looking to upgrade your gear. Great glass is just one component of portrait photography, though. There are a host of other elements to consider, including lighting, composition, posing, use of props, and just getting to know your clients. Here at dPS, we have lots of resources for portrait photographers that cost far less than a new lens, so before you drop your next paycheck on more camera gear, consider upgrading your talent with some education and training. You might be surprised by what you can do with the gear you already have! Now over to you: Do you have a favorite portrait lens? Do you know any tips and tricks that can help other portrait photographers? Leave your thoughts in the comments below! Best portrait photography lenses FAQ Do I need a prime lens to shoot portraits? No, but it helps. Prime lenses have wide apertures and sharp optics, which is why they are preferred by portrait photographers. Today's zoom lenses are better than the zooms of ten or twenty years ago, but you will still get the best results with a prime lens. What is the best focal length for portraits? While everyone has their own preferences, 85mm is often considered to be a good portrait focal length. If you can only get one portrait lens, I would recommend going with an 85mm; this works well for headshots, full-body portraits, and group shots, too. How can I shoot portraits with the kit zoom lens that came with my camera? While I do not recommend kit zoom lenses for paid client work, it is certainly possible to shoot portraits with them. Zoom in as far as you can go, open your aperture as wide as possible, put a lot of distance between your subject and the background, and you can get some decent shots. Is a DSLR or mirrorless camera better for portraits? Either type of camera is fully capable of producing great portraits. Mirrorless cameras have features like eye-detect autofocus that can certainly help, but even today many photographers still prefer DSLRs over mirrorless. It all comes down to personal preference. Thankfully, if you currently shoot with a Nikon or Canon DSLR and want to upgrade to mirrorless someday, both companies make adapters that let you use your current lenses on mirrorless cameras without any drop in quality.







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