AMBER.FOSSILS.IM

When is it amber?

Official pages treat amberization as a continuum, not a single date.

"How long does it take for buried resin to become amber?" The Getty essay's answer is that there is no single answer.

The official story	Official wording
A continuum	David Grimaldi: "No single feature identifies at what age along that continuum the substance becomes amber."
Two expert views	Some experts want material "several million years old or older." Others "opt for a date as recent as forty thousand years before the present." "Much depends on the soil conditions of the resin's burial."
What happens chemically	Liquids, including terpenes that give amber its smell, dissipate. Molecules join into polymers. The resins that became amber "were buried in virtually oxygen-free sediments."

A short quiz

1. Does official wording give one age at which resin becomes amber?
2. What recent date do some experts opt for?
3. What does AMNH call its Zanzibar material?

Answers. No — it is a continuum. As recent as 40,000 years before the present. Subfossil resin, or copal.

Wording from the J. Paul Getty Museum, "What Is Amber?", and the American Museum of Natural History, Amber Collection, checked 18 November 2026. amber.fossils.im is independent of both museums. Typographic sheet: no photographs inside.