



De Barnsteen Specialist

Amber Forgeries

As with many popular products, amber is also imitated. This happens in different ways. The most simple is to sell copal as amber. Also, synthetic resins or even glass is used. Another form is pressed amber. In this case, small fragments are pressed together under pressure to form a larger piece. So pay attention when buying amber! Read here the most commonly used forgery materials and our recommendations for testing amber.



Most commonly used forgery materials

Copal, this is a much younger version of amber and still contains liquid oils. Copal melts at 150 degrees Celsius and is therefore easy to use to manually insert insects. Due to the large similarities with amber, this is often wrongly offered as amber.

Glass, this is not difficult to distinguish from amber. It is much more solid and due to its hardness cannot be scratched by metal. Furthermore, glass feels colder than amber.

Phenolic resin or synthetic resin is often used for to fake amber. The colour and shape can be reproduced almost exactly, but not the smell when burned!

Casein or cheese dust is used to imitate amber with a milky yellow colour. It is slightly heavier than amber and can be recognised by its plastic smell when burnt.

Modern plastic lends itself perfectly to imitate amber, the colors are hardly distinguishable from real amber. Modern plastic is often used to make fake inclusions. Always make sure that the inclusions are not too perfect and the insects not too big.

Insects larger than 10 mm are suspicious, especially at a low price.



Test your own amber

The most effective method is the 'smell' test. Amber has a specific smell of pine trees that is not easy to imitate. Forgeries of copal will give off a sweeter smell of resin. Plastic, phenolic resin or casein forgeries will smell of burnt plastic when heated.

The 'rub test' can be done in the palm of your hand. It is possible to heat amber by rubbing it until it spreads the scent of pine. However, you do need firm hands to do this and a rough surface. Polished amber is difficult to rub to the right temperature.

The "Hot Needle" test: heat a needle and put it in the amber. The smell of pine is unmistakable. Keep in mind that this is not the pure air you are used to from conifers but mixed with the burnt smell of the needle, dust and possible impurities, however, the smell is clearly distinguishable from burnt plastic.

Amber (but also copal) floats on salt water. Spoon 7 or 8 tablespoons of salt into 300 millilitres of water, stir until all the salt is dissolved. If the amber sinks, you are dealing with a forgery.

Do you want to know more about amber? Click on a link below

[How to recognise real amber?](#)

[View amber with insects](#)

[Amber and children](#)