

If you've lived with double glazed windows through a few winters, you already know the difference they make. Rooms hold their heat, street noise fades, and condensation stops gathering on every cold morning. You also know the frustration when something goes wrong: a misted pane that never clears, a draught you can't locate, a handle that loosens again after you've already "fixed" it. I've spent years repairing and surveying double glazing on homes ranging from 1930s semis to new-build apartments. The same patterns crop up, and so do the same preventable mistakes. This is a guide to the faults that repeat, why they recur, and what to do differently so you fix them once and keep them fixed.

What a "blown" or "misted" unit really means

Two panes separated by a spacer create the insulating glass unit, often called the sealed unit. The spacer is usually aluminum or a warm-edge composite with desiccant beads inside. The edge is sealed with primary butyl and a secondary perimeter adhesive, then the cavity is filled with air or argon. When people ask, Can you Fix Blown Double Glazing, they're generally seeing condensation or haze between the panes. That's moisture inside the cavity, which can only get there because the seal is compromised. It can be a pinhole breach, a more obvious failed corner, or cumulative edge diffusion after years of UV and thermal cycling.

Here's the uncomfortable truth: you cannot dry and reseal a failed unit in place to a reliable, durable standard. I've seen DIYers drill tiny holes and blow warm air between panes, even inject alcohol, then cap the holes with plugs or clear sealant. It often clears for a few days or weeks. It always returns. The correct remedy is replacing the sealed unit, ideally with like-for-like or better spec. Misted Double Glazing Repairs done properly focus on diagnosis, measuring, ordering, and fitting a new sealed unit, not playing whack-a-mole with the symptoms.

Understanding that distinction saves money down the road. The glass is relatively affordable compared with ripping out a whole frame. Swapping a sealed unit preserves your existing frames and avoids the hassles of full replacement, provided the frames are sound.

Common repeat failures and why they happen

Blown or misted units grab attention, but they sit in a wider ecosystem. Windows are systems, not parts. I keep a short list in my van of recurrence triggers. If one of these isn't handled, I fully expect a callback.

Thermal stress and glass size. Large south-facing panes can move several millimeters across seasons. If the original unit sits too tight in the sash with minimal packer clearance, it has no room to float. Movement translates straight into edge seal strain. I have measured 1 to 2 mm corner compression marks on gaskets where the unit was wedged in. Two years later, misted again.

Poor drainage. Modern uPVC and aluminum frames include drainage slots and a chambered path for water to escape. If the bottom beads leak or the [Double Glazing Repairs](#) slots clog with debris, water backs up, so the unit sits in a wet trough. Capillary action keeps the edge seal damp. Even a good seal won't last if it lives in a puddle. This is one of the easiest preventable causes.

Wrong glazing packers. I still find timber shims or flimsy plastic slivers instead of compressive glazing packers sized to the unit and frame. Packers control sightlines, load transfer, and squareness. A sagging sash or uneven pressure on the edges works the seal loose and also affects locking alignment. If packers float, the fix doesn't stick.

Over-enthusiastic sealant. Perimeter silicone smeared over everything looks watertight on day one. The problem is that silicone can block weep paths, bond glass to beads in unintended places, or set up differential movement

points where the next warm day shears the bond. More sealant does not mean more waterproof. Correct sealant in the correct location beats volume every time.

Hardware misalignment. A draught that comes back, a handle that loosens again, a hinge that strains the sash, these are often alignment and support issues rather than bad hardware. I audit [Misted Window Repairs cstdgrepairs.com](http://MistedWindowRepairs.com) the whole opening: hinge stack, keepers, compression cams, and the frame squareness. If the sash rides low, the locking cams won't compress evenly. People tighten handles, the pressure increases, and the screws strip or the spindle wears. The real fix is hinge adjustment and packer correction, with the handle tightened last.

Manufacturing variance. Not all sealed units are equal. I see failures as early as three years on bargain units with thin secondary seals. I also see 15 to 20 years from reputable makers with proper warm-edge spacers and argon fill. If a unit failed young, I question the source. The replacement is the time to upgrade the spec even if the frame stays the same.

How to decide between repair and replacement

The quickest way to waste money is replacing entire windows when a sealed unit swap would do, or repeatedly fitting new units into a frame that's already at the end of its life. I start with three checks.

Frame integrity. Tap the uPVC with a knuckle and probe the screw points. If the substrate takes a screw firmly and the reinforcing is intact, the frame is serviceable. For timber, prod the bottom rail and sill returns with an awl. If the tool sinks or the timber flakes, no new glass will save it. For aluminum, check for electrolysis and loose thermal breaks. If frames are straight, watertight, and stable, keep them.

Hardware condition. If the hinge knuckles have play or the friction stays are notched and loose, factor in replacements. Worn hardware will misalign a new glass unit and create new leaks. The cost is modest compared with another callout later.

Thermal and acoustic goals. If you have early 2000s double glazing with 4-6-4 units and basic spacers, a sealed unit upgrade to 4-16-4 with argon and low-e coating shows a noticeable comfort gain. If your street is noisy, laminated inner panes tame high-frequency noise without changing the frames. The labor to swap is already happening. Adding a better spec unit barely changes the time, only the glass cost.

On the other hand, if the frames are twisted, the rebates are chewed up, or water is peeking past welded corners, replacing glass alone invites the same problems back. That's when I recommend full replacement, ideally with survey-level measurements and attention to how the opening integrates with your wall and damp-proofing.

The anatomy of a durable repair

A good repair is rarely about heroics. It is about sequence and discipline. If you are hiring, ask the technician to describe their process. You can tell who has a method.

Survey and measure. Measure the visible glass width and height, then add allowances for the rebate depth and visuals. Most uPVC beads expect 2 to 5 mm of overall clearance per side to allow packers and thermal expansion. If the unit is tight, it breaks seals; if it is sloppy, it rattles. Measure thickness with calipers if possible, or use a glazing thickness gauge. If access makes that tough, a trained eye can read bead profiles and spacer stamps, but guessing is how callbacks happen.

Specify the unit. This is where Misted Double Glazing Repairs can become upgrades. For most homes, a 4-16-4 low-e argon unit with a warm-edge spacer behaves better thermally and lasts longer. If solar gain is a problem on

a south-facing large pane, consider a soft-coat low-e with slightly lower g-value. For bathrooms and kitchens, laminated or toughened glass follows safety codes. If a unit failed from edge stress, step up to a better spacer and confirm correct packer plan.

De-beading and removal. Start with the side beads, then top and bottom, keeping the sash supported so the unit doesn't drop. On older frames the beads can be brittle. Gentle taps with a glazing shovel near the middle of each bead reduce cracking. Once the beads are off, lift the old unit carefully; heavy units call for two people. This is where I check drainage paths and clean out muck, spider nests, and dried sealant strings.

Packer plan. This gets neglected because it is invisible once complete. Use rigid glazing packers rated for the load, placed at quarter points on the bottom to support weight, and side packers to square the unit without bowing the sash. The aim is even compression, straight sightlines, and no direct glass-to-frame contact. If you see a tech throw two random packers in the bottom and call it done, expect the unit to settle and leak.

Set, seal, and re-bead. Seat the unit against the packers, confirm equal gaps around, and snap the beads back in order: top, sides, then bottom, unless the manufacturer advises otherwise. Check that the beads press firmly onto the gasket to avoid capillary paths. Only after bead fitment do I run perimeter sealant where specified, taking care not to block drainage. Internal silicone sealing is usual on some timber sets, not on standard uPVC where the gasket does the primary job.

Final adjustments. Close the sash, test the multipoint lock engagement, and adjust hinges and striker plates so the compression is even. A piece of thin paper should pull with equal resistance around the perimeter when the window is shut. If the handle needs gorilla force, something is misaligned. If it closes too easily with visible daylight at the gasket, you have a draught waiting to happen.

Preventing misted units from returning

A durable repair is half the battle. The rest is what happens over the following seasons. Moisture is the enemy of seals, and movement is the enemy of everything else. You manage both with maintenance and simple habits.

Ventilation matters. I have seen dozens of homes where windows are perfect, yet condensation sits every morning on the room-side glass because indoor humidity is high. Kitchens without lids on boiling pots, bathrooms without extractor use, wet laundry drying on radiators, all raise relative humidity. That moisture tries to get into every colder cavity, including frames and beads. Use trickle vents if fitted, crack windows after showers, and run extractors long enough to bring humidity back down.

Keep drainage clear. Twice a year, pop the lower bead slightly or remove the cill cover if accessible and check the weep holes. A vacuum and a pipe cleaner are often enough. It takes minutes and adds years to seals.

Avoid aftermarket films and wrong cleaners. Privacy films can trap heat in the cavity area if applied to the wrong pane, which stresses seals. Harsh solvents cut gaskets. A mild glass cleaner and a damp cloth are fine. On stubborn marks, use isopropyl sparingly on glass only, not gaskets or frames.

Watch for movement. If a window starts to catch at the top corner, that is early misalignment. Tweak hinge stays and keeps now rather than waiting until you need to yank the handle, which accelerates wear.

Consider shading on large exposures. South and west elevations with big panes benefit from simple shading: exterior awnings, strategic planting, or even interior blinds. Lower peak glass temperatures translate to less thermal pumping at the seals. I once revisited a sunroom where two oversized roof units failed within four years. After adding lightweight exterior shade sails, the replacements are fine six years later.

When simple fixes work, and when they do not

People often ask for the hack that avoids a bigger bill. There are small fixes that last, and there are small fixes that kick the can.

Good quick wins. Replacing worn gaskets will stop edge draughts if the unit is sound. Tightening or swapping a handle with a worn spindle will remove slop. Adjusting hinges and keeps often cures draught complaints without touching glass. Replacing trickle vent covers with ones that close properly calms whistling in windy spots.

False economies. Drilling holes to “de-mist” a blown unit is a classic. It might clear temporarily but returns and can void any warranty for the rest of the set. Slathering silicone around bead edges looks like sealing but often pushes water into the frame where it can’t escape. Using foam in cavities that are designed to breathe can trap water against timber.

If you are uncertain, a short professional survey is inexpensive and can separate symptom from cause. I spent twenty minutes at a terraced house where the back bedroom window had recurring mist and a persistent draught. The owner had replaced the glass twice in five years. The culprit was invisible: an uncut internal drainage channel from the original installation. Water ran from the head down behind the bead and soaked the bottom edge. One careful cut, a proper packer plan, and new beads solved it. No more repeat failures.

The warranty angle, and how to use it without grief

Many homeowners do not realize that sealed units often carry their own warranty from the glass manufacturer, separate from the installer. The common pattern I see is 5 to 10 years on sealed unit failure, 1 to 3 years on hardware, and a similar period on workmanship. Keep paperwork. Note dates. Take photos of any misting when it first appears and again after varying weather so you can show it is not just surface condensation.

If a unit fails within warranty, push for like-for-like or better replacement. If the original spacer or coating spec was poor, a small surcharge to upgrade is usually worth it. Warranties sometimes exclude coastal and high-altitude environments unless specified. In those areas, you should expect higher-grade seals and sometimes different spacer materials. I mention this because I’ve seen repeated failures in seaside homes where standard units were used. Salt and wind load tell on the seals. Specify accordingly and the recurrence stops.

Costs and realistic expectations

In the UK, a typical sealed unit replacement for a standard casement window might range from 80 to 180 pounds per pane depending on size, thickness, and spec, with larger panes or laminated safety glass costing more. In other markets, adjust the numbers but the proportions are similar. Labor is a meaningful chunk, so bundling a few units at once can be efficient. Hardware tweaks are usually nominal if done during the same visit.

Timelines vary. A competent glazier can measure in under an hour and fit in a second visit once the glass arrives, usually 3 to 10 working days depending on the supplier. If you’re upgrading to uncommon specs, plan for a longer lead time. Ask up front about lead times to avoid frustration. If a company promises same-day replacement for custom sizes, they are likely cutting corners with stock units and adapter tricks that rarely fit as well as a correctly measured unit.

As for longevity, good sealed units commonly last 10 to 20 years. Frames can go longer if maintained, especially aluminum and well-kept timber. If you’ve had multiple failures at 5 to 7 years, look for systemic issues: drainage, packers, solar stress, or poor sourcing. Fix the system and the pattern ends.

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A homeowner's quick check before calling a pro

This short pre-survey saves time and helps you brief the technician.

- Note where misting appears and when. If it is between the panes at all times, you have a blown unit. If it is only on the room side in the morning and wipes off, it's room humidity.
- Open and close the window, feeling for resistance. If it lifts slightly before latching, hinges likely need adjustment.
- Look at the bottom of the frame outside. Are there weep holes? Are they clear?
- Photograph the spacer bar for any stamps showing thickness or maker, which helps ordering.
- Check nearby rooms. If several units on one elevation are failing, suspect sun load or installation practices rather than a single dud pane.

Choosing a repairer who won't cause repeat issues

The industry has excellent tradespeople and a few seat-of-the-pants operators. You don't need to become a glazing engineer, but you can ask pointed questions.



Do they measure with tools or eyeball it? Proper calipers, glazing gauges, and detailed notes beat guesses. Do they talk about packer plans and drainage? If that draws a blank stare, keep looking. What sealed unit specification do they propose, and why? If they default to cheapest with no reasoning, that is a tell. Will they adjust hinges and keeps after fitting? The tidy installers include this as standard. Can they show proof of the glass source? Reputable suppliers print batch codes. That traceability matters if something goes wrong.

Anecdotal, the best installers I know are happy to explain what they're doing and why. They might do it quickly, but they won't rush past the fundamentals. When a client watches me pop a bead, vacuum out a drain channel, lay four precise packers, and adjust a hinge by a couple of millimeters, they understand where the value sits. The pane is the visible part, the system around it is what stops issues from recurring.

Edge cases worth calling out

Historic timber frames with slim sightlines. You can get slimline double glazed units with narrow spacers to mimic single glazing. They are more delicate. Moisture control and breathable paints are vital. Over-sealing timber traps moisture that ruins seals and the wood. I advise micro-venting and a strict maintenance schedule.

Tilt-and-turn mechanisms. These pack more hardware into the sash, which means more opportunities for misalignment. A misted unit may be secondary to a sash that drags on one corner. Fitting the glass without confirming squareness can overstress the hinge side. Adjust in tilt and turn positions, not just closed.

Triple glazing retrofits. Swapping a double for triple glazing in an existing uPVC frame often overloads the sash weight limit and alters sightlines. If you want better thermal performance, a high-spec double with warm-edge spacer and low-e often hits the sweet spot without the weight penalty.

Coastal properties. Salt accelerates corrosion on hardware and can degrade certain sealants. Specify marine-grade hardware and sealed units with robust edge seals. Clear the exterior more frequently. Expect shorter service intervals and budget accordingly.

Bringing it all together

Double Glazing Repairs done right feel unremarkable after they're finished because the window goes back to being invisible: airtight, quiet, no fuss. The way to avoid recurring issues is to treat the window as a system. Replace blown units rather than attempting to dry them out. Use proper measurements and a suitable glass spec. Respect drainage, packers, and movement. Adjust the hardware so the sash closes evenly. Keep humidity in check and clean the weeps now and then.

If you've been burned by repeated failures, look past the glass. Ask about the root causes and insist on a methodical approach. The fixes are not magic. They're practical, often small, and they work when done in the right order. When someone asks, Can you Fix Blown Double Glazing, the honest answer is yes, by replacing the sealed unit and dealing with the reasons it failed. Do that, and you won't be asking again in two years.