

Double glazing earns its keep quietly. It cuts the chill, softens street noise, and holds the heat where you pay for it to stay. When it starts to fail, the signs are often subtle before they become obvious. Catching those early tells matters, because a blown unit left alone will cost you heat, comfort, and ultimately more money than a timely repair. I've inspected hundreds of windows over the years, from neat new-builds to Victorian terraces with modern replacements, and I can tell you that small clues show up months before a window gives up completely.

This guide walks through what "blown" actually means, why it happens, how to spot it early, and which fixes make sense. I will also address common questions, including the practical realities behind Double Glazing Repairs, when Misted Double Glazing Repairs are worth it, and the perennial: Can you Fix Blown Double Glazing?

What "blown" really means

A standard double glazed unit is a sealed glass sandwich. Two panes are held apart by a spacer bar, the cavity is filled with air or a noble gas like argon, and the perimeter is sealed. That sealed environment slows heat transfer and keeps moisture out. When a unit is "blown," the seal has failed. Moisture sneaks into the cavity, the gas can leak out, and the unit no longer performs like it should.

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A blown unit doesn't always look catastrophic. You might have light hazing some mornings that disappears by afternoon. Or a barely visible crescent of condensation around the edges. Many homeowners shrug and blame the weather. The weather is often the messenger, not the cause.

Why small problems turn into big bills

Once the perimeter seal starts drawing in moisture, the desiccant in the spacer bar tries to keep up. It absorbs water until it is saturated. After that, every swing in temperature or humidity makes the internal surfaces fog or produce water droplets. That moisture, left long enough, can stain internal coatings, encourage mould around the frame, and reduce the unit's insulating performance. Heating bills creep upward. Frames, especially timber, can suffer. In aluminium systems, internal drainage can clog with debris that the wet environment invites. Leave it another season and you may be replacing more than glass.

I've seen rental flats where a single hazy bedroom window nudged winter bills up by 10 to 15 percent, just from the combined hit of lost insulation and occupants opening windows to fight damp. In one semi-detached house, a family ignored a downstairs bay because "it only fogs after Sunday roast." Two winters later, the timber sill needed splice repairs and the plaster below the reveal had blown. The glass was the cheap part of that job.

Early warning signs you can spot without tools

The easiest way to catch a failing unit is to look for patterns that repeat. Spend a week paying attention. The same **Double Glazing Repairs** corner fogging at the same time of day tells you more than a single dramatic episode

after a storm.

The most common early indicators look like this:

- Faint, patchy misting between the panes that clears as the sun hits the glass. You are not imagining it. That is moisture in the cavity, waking up with the morning dew cycle and then evaporating as the unit warms.
- A smudgy halo around the perimeter, especially on colder days. The insulating gas may have leaked, leaving colder edges that grab moisture first.
- Tiny mineral trails or “snail trails” inside the cavity. Water has been inside long enough to leave deposits as it dries.
- Black specks under the spacer bar or at the corners. Desiccant dust or mould signals long-term moisture ingress.
- Drafts around the sash that you cannot explain. The unit itself might still be sealed, but if beads of sealant have separated or gaskets have shrunk, the frame will move more and accelerate failure of the edge seal.

Watch the way condensation behaves on the room-facing surface as well. Surface condensation on the inside glass, especially in kitchens and bathrooms, is often about indoor humidity and ventilation rather than a blown unit. The tell is location. If it wipes off with a cloth, it’s surface moisture. If you cannot reach it because it sits between the panes, you are looking at a failed or failing seal.

Common causes that don’t get enough attention

People tend to blame age, and age matters. Most sealed units are expected to last somewhere between 10 and 25 years depending on quality and exposure. But there are other, avoidable causes:

Manufacturing shortcuts. Low-grade perimeter seals, thin spacer bars, or corners not properly crimped can build in a time bomb. I still find units under five years old with weak corner junctions, especially in budget installations.

UV exposure. South and west elevations bake the seals. Black or dark-coloured spacers absorb more heat, then cool rapidly at night, and that movement stresses the bond.

Poor installation. If the fitter bedded the unit hard against a frame without correct packers, the glass carries loads it shouldn’t. Over time the unit flexes, the seal cracks, moisture gets in. I once pulled a pane that had been set directly against a screw head. The tiny point load telegraphed into a hairline at the edge seal two years later.

Blocked drainage. Many uPVC and aluminium frames have weep holes. When they clog with debris, water sits where it shouldn’t. Prolonged standing water around the unit perimeter attacks sealant and raises the humidity around the edge seal.

House movement. Settling, slammed sashes, and repeated handle strain can rack a sash just enough that the unit feels it every time the temperature swings.

If one window has failed and others are the same age and type, assume siblings may be heading the same way, particularly on the same elevation.

How to separate surface condensation from a blown unit

I get asked to quote for blown units that are just fighting household humidity. Before you call for Double Glazing Repairs, do a simple check in cool weather.

Warm the room to a comfortable level, then run a dehumidifier or crack a window and run the extractor fan if you’re in a kitchen or bathroom. Wipe the inside surface dry. If condensation returns on the room-facing surface in

minutes while the inside air is drier and warm, you have a ventilation issue, not a blown unit. If the fog sits inside the cavity and doesn't respond to anything you do inside, the seal has likely gone.

Another trick is the fingertip test on a chilly morning. Touch the glass in the centre with the back of your hand, then the edge about three centimetres in. On a healthy argon-filled unit with a warm room behind, the centre usually feels closer to room temperature than the edge. If the whole pane feels uniformly cold, the gas fill may have escaped, which often partners with a failing seal.

What happens to performance when a unit is blown

When a double glazed unit is intact, its U-value reflects the insulating gas, the low-e coatings, and the stable dry cavity. Once it is blown, the gas fill is compromised and moisture moves in. Expect the U-value to degrade. In practical terms, you may feel colder near the window, and the room may lose heat faster.

You also lose solar control consistency. Coatings can get blotchy as mineral deposits and micro-corrosion accumulate within the cavity. That alters the way the unit reflects and absorbs energy. Over time, this can make rooms feel unevenly warm or induce glare at certain angles.

Noise performance can dip as well. A sealed, dry cavity dampens sound better than a leaky one that allows pressure equalisation. If you start to hear more traffic noise than you remember, and other variables are constant, take it as another clue.



Can you Fix Blown Double Glazing?

Short answer: sometimes, but with caveats. The internet is full of "repair" methods, some more wishful than technical. The realistic options fall into three categories.

Replace the sealed glass unit only. This is the most common route and usually the best value. If the frames are sound and the hinges, handles, and gaskets are in good order, a glazier can measure, order, and fit a new sealed unit into the existing sash. You keep your frames, and you restore performance. On typical uPVC casements, this takes under an hour per window on site, after a lead time of a week or two for the unit to be made.

Vent and reseal services. Some companies drill tiny holes into the external pane, dry the cavity with warm air or desiccant, then fit a microvent. The misting often clears, which looks like a success. The catch is performance. You now have a vented unit without the original sealed environment or argon fill. It may look better and buy you time

at a lower cost, but it rarely restores insulation to the original specification. I will recommend this only for secondary spaces where appearance matters more than thermal performance, for example in a garage or a seldom-used utility room.

Full window replacement. When frames are warped, sashes are failing, or the hardware is shot, replacing the entire window can make sense. It costs more and involves more disruption, but it is often a smarter spend if you have multiple issues. In older timber frames with significant decay, attempting to fit a new sealed unit into a compromised sash is false economy.

A note on warranties: if your windows are within the installer's guarantee, usually 5 to 10 years for sealed units, call them first. Many manufacturers will replace a failed unit at no cost within the warranty period. Keep paperwork and installation dates handy.

Misted Double Glazing Repairs that actually work

If your goal is to restore both clarity and performance, replacing the sealed unit is the dependable route. A competent glazier will:

- Measure visible glass size, rebate depth, and spacer thickness to ensure the new unit fits perfectly without stressing the frame.
- Match or improve the specification, for instance upgrading to a low-e coating and warm-edge spacers if your old unit used aluminium spacers. You can often step up to argon fill and better coatings for a modest premium.
- Check packers, gaskets, and drainage channels during installation. Often a small frame tweak prevents a repeat failure.

Work with someone who turns up with glazing shovels, suction cups, proper packers, and a moisture meter, not just a pry bar and hope. Ask for the unit spec in writing, including glass type, spacer type, gas fill, and any coatings. If you live in a noisy area, ask about laminated acoustic glass. The marginal cost increase can be well worth it.

Cost sense: when to repair and when to replace

Costs vary by size, spec, and region. As a rough guide in the UK, replacing a standard-size sealed unit in uPVC might run from £80 to £200 per unit, more for large panes, toughened or laminated glass, or shaped units. Full window replacement starts several times higher because you pay for frames, fitting, and finishing.

If a house has a single cloudy pane in a room you use daily, fix it now. If three or more units on the same elevation are showing early signs, consider a grouped plan with your glazier. Ordering multiple units together can lower per-unit costs and save you repeat visits.

For timber frames, factor in prep. A rotten sill or loose glazing beads need attention or the new unit will suffer. For aluminium or composite, check that thermal breaks are intact and that drainage is clear. Spend the extra hour on the frame checks while the beads are off.

How to slow down failure in the first place

Prevention comes down to installing well, maintaining lightly, and not asking the window to be something it isn't.

Check and clear drainage slots every spring and autumn. A quick poke with a plastic stirrer and a rinse with a jug of water keeps channels clear. If water sits in the frame after rain, you have a problem to fix.

Mind the packers. If you ever have beads off for any reason, ensure load-bearing packers are present and correctly placed. The unit should sit square and supported. A glass unit resting on the wrong point will move every time the sash moves.



Protect seals from solvent sprays. Aggressive cleaners and some paints can attack perimeter seals and gaskets. Use mild detergent on frames. If you paint timber beads, mask the seals. For uPVC, avoid solvent-based cleaners near gaskets.

Vent rooms appropriately. Kitchens and bathrooms will always test the limits of condensation. Use extractor fans, lids on pans, and a bit of common sense. High humidity stresses the coldest surfaces first.

Choose better components at order time. Warm-edge spacers, quality low-e coatings, and reputable manufacturers hold up better. If you can, choose units with a decent certification trail. Ask about the sealant system used by the manufacturer.

Seasonal clues that help your diagnosis

Autumn often shows the first hint. Warm afternoons, cool nights, and spikes of morning dew expose weak seals. Note any window that hazes internally in the hour after sunrise. Winter turns the dial up. If a particular pane never seems to clear on cold days, even with decent indoor warmth, add it to your repair list.

Spring gives you a deceptive reprieve as outdoor humidity falls and the sun has more power. Do not let temporarily clear glass lull you. The underlying failure has not reversed. Summer brings UV load, and seals expand and contract. If you spot bubbles or microcracks in external sealant or a bead that has pulled away, act before autumn returns.

The role of frames and hardware

It is tempting to look only at the glass. Frames and hardware often set the stage. On uPVC windows, look at hinges. If the sash sags, it can pinch the unit. New friction stays cost little and protect the glass. On timber, confirm that beads are snug and water-shedding profiles are intact. Refinish bare timber promptly. On aluminium, keep an eye on thermal breaks and joint seals. If you find water inside the frame after rain, track down the ingress.

Rubber gaskets shrink with age. When they pull back at the corners, dirt and water work their way in. Replacing a gasket set can extend the life of new units you install. This is money well spent during Misted Double Glazing

Myths that refuse to die

A few persistent ideas steer people wrong.

Drilling a hole and squirting in alcohol is not a permanent fix. You can dry the cavity temporarily, but you haven't restored the seal, the gas fill, or the thermal performance. For a cheap shed window, fine. For a living room, no.

"Only old windows blow." I see failures under five years old when cheap units meet harsh exposure or poor fitting. I also see 20-year-old units going strong where quality and installation were right.

"If you can't see mist, it's fine." Not always. I sometimes measure units that look clear yet feel cold compared to their neighbors because the gas fill has gone. You lose performance before you see moisture.

"Replacing the glass means replacing the frame." No. On most modern systems, swapping the sealed unit is straightforward and far cheaper than full replacement, provided the frame is sound.

A simple at-home check before you call

Before you ring for Double Glazing Repairs, do a five-minute routine on a cool, dry morning:

- Wipe interior glass surfaces clean and dry. Note any marks that appear to sit inside the cavity rather than on the surface.
- Run your hand around the frame, feeling for drafts, especially at the meeting stile and along the bottom.
- Compare suspect panes with a known good pane in the same room. Temperature at the centre, clarity at the edges, and how fast any mist clears will tell you plenty.
- Peer closely at the spacer bar. Look for desiccant dust, gaps at the corners, or corrosion on metallic spacers.
- Pour a small cup of water gently along the exterior sill and check that frame drainage carries it away. Standing water is a red flag.

If two or more of those checks point to trouble, you likely have a blown or soon-to-blow unit.

What to ask when you get quotes

Not all quotes are equal. Two numbers that look similar can hide very different specifications. Ask:

What glass spec are you supplying? Get details on low-e type, thickness, laminate or toughened where required, and whether the spacer is warm-edge.

What gas fill will you use, and to what target? Argon is common. Some manufacturers offer krypton in special cases, but cost rises fast.

What is the expected U-value of the replacement unit? Numbers vary by configuration. Lower is better.

Will you check and, if needed, replace gaskets and packers? Insist on proper support and drainage.

What warranty applies to the new unit? Five years is common. Some offer ten.

If you work with a local glazier who takes time to answer those questions, you're in safe hands.

When to upgrade rather than match like-for-like

If you plan to stay put for a while, using the failure as a prompt to upgrade can be smart. Two strategic moves make the biggest difference:

Upgrade to warm-edge spacers with argon. It reduces edge-of-glass condensation and improves overall performance. Many older units used aluminium spacers that create a colder bridge at the perimeter.

Specify laminated glass in street-facing or noisy rooms. Laminated panes improve security and dampen sound. The cost increase is usually modest for one or two panes and noticeable in use.

In south-facing rooms that overheat in summer, consider a solar control low-e. It will cut heat gain and glare. You'll feel it on the first hot weekend.

Safety and compliance notes

In many jurisdictions, glazed areas near doors, in bathrooms, or below a certain height must be safety glass, typically toughened or laminated. Replace like with like or better. If you see etched markings that indicate safety glazing on the old unit, make sure the new one matches the rating. Stairwells and full-height glazing areas also have rules. A good installer will know them, but it never hurts to ask.

If your property is listed or in a conservation area, check whether the frames and visible details must match an approved profile. Often you can still replace sealed units without planning issues, but details matter.



What a realistic repair day looks like

On the morning of the job, a glazier will protect the area, pop the beads, and gently free the failed unit. Old glazing blocks come out, drainage is cleared, and packers are planned. The new unit goes in with suction cups, set square, then packed for load and toe-and-heel where needed on opening sashes. Beads go back in reverse order, starting with the longest, tapping in evenly so they seat fully. A careful installer takes a minute with a credit-card-thin tool to check that each bead is fully engaged. They clean both sides of the glass, scribe any needed sealant neatly, and test the sash. From arrival to finish, a straightforward casement might take 30 minutes. Bays and large sliders take longer.

Good professionals work neatly. If you see someone forcing beads with a screwdriver or skipping packers, stop the job. It is easier to correct technique before the unit is stressed.

Final thought: treat misting as a maintenance signal, not a crisis

Windows are working parts of a building. Even high-quality units age. When you catch the first signs of failure and act, you spend less and live better. You get your view back, your room runs warmer with less energy, and you avoid damp creeping into the fabric around the frame.

So if you have been staring through a ghostly blur every morning or wiping the inside glass without ever quite getting it clean, take it as a nudge. A targeted call for Misted Double Glazing Repairs or a straight unit replacement is usually simple, quicker than you expect, and far cheaper than replacing a window that has been allowed to leak, rot, or rattle itself apart.

Double glazing earns its keep quietly. When it whispers that something is wrong, listen early, fix once, and move on.