

Walk down any British street built since the 1980s and you will see the same quiet hero in nearly every frame: the white UPVC window with double glazing. They last well, keep heat in, reduce noise from the road, and need little fuss. Until they don't. When draughts sneak in around the sash, or a lovely south-facing pane turns milky with condensation you can't wipe away, confidence drops. People ask the same cluster of questions. Are double glazing repairs worth it? Can you fix blown double glazing, or do you have to replace the whole unit? Is there anything different about UPVC frames that changes the repair strategy?

Short answer, repairs are often possible and often sensible. Long answer, it depends on how the system has failed. A double glazed window is not a monolith. It is a frame, a sash, an insulated glass unit, gaskets, hardware, drainage, and the sealants that knit it together. When you understand the parts, you can triage quickly and pay for the fix that actually solves the problem.

What “double glazing” is, in practical terms

A modern insulated glass unit, often called an IGU, is two panes of glass separated by a spacer bar. The void is sealed at the edges and filled with dry air or inert gas, usually argon. The inner faces get a low-e coating to reflect heat back into the room. That whole sandwich is one component, and it is held into a sash by glazing beads and gaskets inside a UPVC frame.

A UPVC window is usually multi-chambered. Those hollow sections in the extruded profile add stiffness, improve thermal performance, and hide a steel reinforcement in larger sashes. Drainage slots and pressure-equalised cavities let water that gets past the outer gaskets flow harmlessly to the outside. You need those passages clear. If they block, you can see internal moisture problems and swelling pains that people wrongly attribute to blown units.

When something goes wrong, it tends to be one of three categories. The glass unit fails and mists up. The hardware or seals fail and you lose smooth operation or weather tightness. Or the frame becomes distorted or damaged, usually from heat gain, settling, or a poor fit.

What's different about repairs on UPVC

Carpenters and traditional glaziers sometimes dislike working on UPVC because it behaves differently from timber. Wood lets you plane, pack, and re-paint the sins away. UPVC doesn't. It does not accept many adhesives well, it moves more with heat, and it has its own fasteners and beads that need the correct technique to remove and refit without damage. That doesn't make repairs harder, just different.

Several practical points matter:

- Beads on internally glazed UPVC sashes come out in a particular sequence and go back in with the same orientation. Bend them, and they'll pop back out or leave a visible gap.
- Many UPVC windows use specific wedge gaskets. Swap profile for profile, not just “close enough,” or you alter compression and risk leaks.
- Hardware like espagnolette locks and friction hinges is widely available, but stack height and track offset must match, especially on older systems. Measure before you order.
- UPVC expands roughly twice as much as glass with temperature swings. If someone packed the unit too tight, you can get stress cracks at the corner or a sash that binds on hot afternoons.

Once you take those into account, you can diagnose and repair with confidence.

How to recognise a blown unit versus a sealing issue

The most common homeowner query lands in two lines: the window looks foggy, and can you clean inside it? If you see moisture or mist between the panes, the hermetic seal has failed. The air or argon escaped, moist air got in, and the desiccant inside the spacer reached saturation. No amount of surface cleaning will cleanse the inner faces because you cannot reach them without destroying the sealed unit. Search terms like “Misted Double Glazing Repairs” or “Can you Fix Blown Double Glazing” are everywhere, and the answer is nuanced.

You can't truly repair a failed edge seal in situ. You replace the insulated glass unit. Some companies drill holes and vent the cavity, then add valves or anti-fog agents. In my experience, that buys time at best and changes the thermal performance. On rental stock when budgets are thin, it can turn a bathroom window from unsightly to acceptable for a year or two. On a main living space, you will notice the loss of clarity, the potential for recurring fog, and slightly worse U-values. If you care about energy efficiency, bite the bullet and swap the unit.

This is where UPVC makes life easier. An experienced fitter can deglaze a typical casement sash and replace the IGU in 30 to 60 minutes. You are not replacing the whole window or frame, just the sealed unit. For large picture windows, add a bit more time and some suction cups, but the principle is the same. If the beads are internal, which they usually are for security, you can do this from inside the room.

Why misting happens, and what to check before you order

People assume age is the culprit. Age matters, but installation and environment matter just as much. I've replaced sashes where one unit failed at seven years while the matching next room unit lasted twenty. Here are patterns I've seen:

- Units facing strong afternoon sun often fail first because temperature cycles are harsher. If the packers were tight or uneven, thermal expansion stresses the edge seal.
- Bathrooms and kitchens produce more moisture. That leads to a bigger vapour pressure differential across the seal. If you skimped on trickle vents or the extractor isn't used, the units in those rooms fail earlier.
- Poor glazing practice, like missing or perished setting blocks, leaves the unit sitting on the sash frame without support. The weight of glass drifts downwards over time, puts load on the spacer, and weakens the seal.

Before you order a replacement, inspect the beads and measure the cavity thickness accurately. Many older UPVC windows used 20 mm or 24 mm units. Modern replacements may be 28 mm or 32 mm. You need to match the existing pocket depth and bead profile. If you choose a thicker unit than the beads and sash allow, you will be tempted to force it in, which warps the sash and creates leak paths.

When **Misted Window Repairs** in doubt, pop one bead and measure the sightlines. Check the thickness of the existing IGU with a caliper or a gauge card. Note any low-e marking on the glass, usually a small stamp in the corner, and specify warm-edge spacers if energy performance matters. If you have more than three units to replace, a small increase in specification, like argon fill and soft-coat low-e, usually pays back in a few winters.

Fixing draughts and rattles that aren't glass faults

Not all double glazing repairs involve the glass. More often, a window has drifted out of alignment or the gaskets have shrunk. UPVC sashes use friction hinges, sometimes called stays, that control the opening and closing arc. After years of use, screws loosen, paint overspray gums them up, or the sash drops a few millimetres. You notice a draught near the handle side or a catch that requires a shove.

If you see daylight between sash and frame when closed, or you can move the sash with hand pressure, start with hinge adjustments. Most quality hinges have a small eccentric cam **Double Glazing Repairs** or slotted screws that let you nudge the sash inboard or outboard. Check that the hinge stack height matches on both sides. Then look at the keeps along the frame where the espag bolts engage. Many keeps are adjustable with a screwdriver. A quarter turn tighter on the cams can transform a whistling window into a snug seal. Don't overdo it. Too much compression crushes the gasket and accelerates wear.

Gaskets deserve respect. The wedge gasket that presses the unit against the outer seal is cheap to replace and makes a visible difference to wind tightness. If the gasket has hardened or shrunk at the corners, pull a sample and source the same profile. Push it in with a bone tool, not a screwdriver, to avoid nicking it. Wipe a thin film of silicone lubricant along the compression seals to stop sticking and squeaks.

Handles and gearboxes are common failure points in tilt-and-turn windows. The multipoint gearbox can shear internally, leaving you with a floppy handle that doesn't control anything. Replacement is straightforward if you match backset and spindle length. That's a 45 to 90 minute repair for an experienced fitter, including cleaning and re-lubrication. It feels like a new window afterward.

When the frame is the problem

UPVC is robust but not invincible. I see three frame-related issues most often: distorted sashes in south-facing bays, split welds at the corners in older or lower quality frames, and damage from retrofitted blinds or security devices that used the wrong screws.

Heat gain can curve a long span sash slightly. If the hinge side bows, it drags and scuffs. You can sometimes tune this out with careful hinge packing and by easing the keep engagement. If the weld has failed or the sash is visibly twisted, replace the sash or the whole window. Anything else is a patch.

Screw damage is avoidable. If you attach a roller blind inside the frame return, use short screws. A 40 mm screw can pierce a drainage channel or interfere with the reinforcement. I have seen three windows that leaked at the bottom corner only when the wind blew hard from the west. The culprit was screws in exactly the wrong place, and a sealed weep hole. Fixing it meant removing the screws, re-opening the drainage and touching in the holes properly with compatible filler.

Repairing without creating new problems

UPVC, glass coatings, and seals are friendly until they are not. Three small mistakes I still see on callouts:

- Using solvent-heavy cleaners on low-e coated glass edges during replacement. The wrong cleaner can creep into the edge seal and reduce longevity. Stick to isopropyl alcohol on the glass face, keep solvents away from the spacer.
- Forcing glazing beads. If a bead does not click back in with firm pressure and a mallet block, something is packed wrong. Remove, repack, and try again rather than bending the bead.
- Ignoring pressure equalisation. Those tiny slit vents at the bottom of frames are not optional. Make sure they are clear and that external cappings sit correctly after any repair. A blocked drain will send water to the path of least resistance, which could be your plaster reveal.

Cost ranges you can trust

Prices vary by region and access, but rough bands help planning. Replacing a standard casement IGU in a UPVC window usually runs from 90 to 160 pounds per unit for clear toughened glass up to about 1 square metre. Add 20 to 30 percent for laminated or special coatings. Larger units, bay windows, or awkward access can push that to 180 to 300 pounds. If you are replacing multiple units at once, expect a lower per-unit price because travel and setup are spread out.

Hardware repairs, like friction hinge pairs, come in around 25 to 45 pounds for parts plus 60 to 120 pounds labour depending on the window size and whether the sash needs to come out. An espag handle swap is inexpensive, often under 60 pounds all in unless the gearbox is gone. Full gasket replacement around an average window might be 40 to 80 pounds in materials plus labour.

Comparatively, a full window replacement in UPVC ranges from 400 to 900 pounds for a basic casement, more for tilt-and-turn or shaped frames. If your frames are sound, double glazing repairs that target IGUs and hardware are usually the better value.

What to do before you call a pro

A few simple checks save you from paying for the wrong fix.

- Clean the exterior pane and check again. Road film can mimic fog from inside the cavity, especially in low winter sun.
- Open the window and inspect the weep holes and drainage slots. Clear debris with a plastic spatula or a stiff card. Never jam metal into the slots.
- Move the handle and watch the locking points. If the mushroom cams do not move evenly, the gearbox or spindle might be at fault. Note any crunching.
- Sight along the sash edges. If you see a bow, take a photo from the hinge side and share it with the repairer.
- Measure the glass visible area, then add the typical cover for the bead, usually 10 to 15 mm each side. Your repairer will still measure, but good first measurements speed up quoting.

Those small steps help determine whether you need glass, hardware, gaskets, or some combination. They also make you a better buyer because you can describe the symptoms precisely.

Are “misted double glazing repairs” that drill the unit worth it?

This comes up often enough to deserve its own space. Some firms offer to drill a tiny hole, vent the moisture, wash the cavity with an anti-fog agent, then insert a tiny plug. It costs less than a new IGU and restores short-term clarity. In a few cases, such as an outbuilding or a soon-to-be-renovated room, that is fine. If you care about thermal performance and long-term appearance, it is not equivalent to a proper sealed unit replacement.

The original edge seal provides the barrier to moisture and holds argon where specified. Once it has failed, the unit is compromised. Venting creates a pathway for air exchange. You might reduce condensation for a season or two, but you have effectively turned the IGU into a controlled-breathing unit with a lower effective R-value. For sashes that sit in full sun, the pressure changes can draw more moisture in over time. My advice: choose this only as a stopgap where budget or timing forces your hand.



Matching new glass to old frames without looking patchy

People worry that a single fresh unit will look different, like putting a new tooth in an older smile. It can, if you ignore visible choices. The glass tint, the spacer color, and any decorative bars affect the look.

Most UPVC windows from the 2000s used silver spacers. New warm-edge spacers come in black, grey, brown, and white. Pick the closest match to existing units so the sightlines stay consistent. If the neighboring sashes use internal Georgian bars, replace like-for-like with the same bar width and layout. If budget allows and you are replacing multiple units, this is your chance to move the whole elevation to warm-edge black spacers for a cleaner, less reflective look from the street.

Low-e coatings also change reflectivity slightly. A modern soft-coat low-e is more efficient than older hard-coat, but it can appear a touch greyer at certain angles. Most people never notice. If you are sensitive to it and only one unit is being replaced on a facade you stare at daily, discuss coating options with the supplier. Matching is possible.

Condensation on the room side versus inside the unit

It is worth separating two kinds of water on glass. If you see condensation on the room side of a cold morning, your glazing may be doing its job. High indoor humidity meeting a cold pane equals droplets. Ventilation, heating balance, trickle vents, and dehumidifiers help. You don't need a glazier for that.

If the condensation is inside the double glazing cavity, that is a failed unit and needs a glass swap. If the condensation is on the outside pane in spring and autumn, on clear nights, that is often a sign of good low-e performance. The outer glass is losing heat to the night sky and getting colder than the air, so dew forms. It clears mid-morning as the sun warms it. Annoying, but not a fault.

What pros carry on the van and why it matters

A decent repair technician carries glazing shovels, a bead deglazing tool, suction cups, profile samples of common gaskets, hinge sets in typical sizes, espag handles with various spindle lengths, silicone spray, packers from 1 to 6 mm, and a mallet with a nylon face. I mention this because it affects your experience. If a company arrives empty-handed and plans to return in a week to adjust hinges, you picked the wrong outfit. Many common adjustments and hardware swaps can be completed on the first visit. Measuring and ordering replacement glass will require a return visit, but excellence shows in how much they put right immediately.

The sustainability angle that isn't just marketing

Replacing a whole UPVC window sends a large composite item to waste and consumes more resources. If your frames are structurally sound and not warped or brittle, targeting the failure point is better. A new IGU restores thermal performance and clarity with a fraction of the embodied carbon. You also avoid the disruption of removing trims, risking damage to plaster and reveals, and re-making seals to the wall.

There are times when full replacement is wiser. If the external cills are split, the reinforcement is rusted, or the frame lacks thermal breaks in a harsh climate, you buy your way out of trouble by starting over. But most homes benefit from a phase where Double Glazing Repairs keep the system working while spreading costs across several years. Prioritise rooms with the worst failures first and move systematically.

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Seasonal timing and realistic lead times

Glass processors can turn standard units around quickly, often in 3 to 7 working days. Specials, like shaped panes, laminated, or solar control coatings, can take 2 to 3 weeks. Fitters tend to book faster in late winter and early spring, and they get congested in autumn when the first cold snap reveals every draught in town. If you want pre-winter repairs, plan in early September. You will likely secure better scheduling and sometimes modest discounts for multi-unit orders.

Work windows into family schedules too. Replacing IGUs is not messy, but there is a period where the opening has no glass. On a windy day, that can chill a room. Good crews set up tarps and work efficiently, but think about pets and children while a large opening is exposed.

A few telling anecdotes from jobs that taught me something

A bay window on a 1996 detached house misted in three out of five panes. The owner assumed a manufacturing batch failure. When I popped the beads, I found no setting blocks along the bottom edges. The units had sunk and sat hard against the sash frame, loading the edge seals. We replaced the IGUs and set them correctly with 28 mm blocks under the quarter points. Eight years later, still clear, no failures.

A ground-floor bathroom had a persistent mould problem and misted glazing within ten years. The extractor fan worked, but the trickle vent had been siliconed shut from outside by a previous owner worried about noise. Opening that vent, replacing the one blown unit, and advising the household to run the extractor for 15 minutes after showers solved the lot. The same family had been quoted for full window replacements across the rear elevation by another firm.

Finally, a warm July callout where a client reported windows that wouldn't close in the afternoon. South elevation, large casements, dark grey foiled UPVC. The darker finish absorbed more heat, the sashes expanded, and tolerances vanished. We adjusted the hinges to relieve the bind and swapped to slightly softer compression on the keeps. A small change, big daily improvement. No glass or frames needed, just an understanding of how UPVC moves.

Pulling it all together

Double glazing in UPVC frames can be repaired effectively, often at sensible cost, when you target the actual point of failure. Glass units that mist must be replaced for a true fix. Hardware and gaskets that wear can be renewed, often on the first visit. Frame issues require a sober eye, but most are either adjustment or a cue to plan a phased upgrade.

If you are weighing the options and typing "Can you Fix Blown Double Glazing" into a search bar, the answer is yes in the sense that you can restore performance and clarity by replacing the sealed unit, without ripping out the entire window. If your search is "Misted Double Glazing Repairs," the most reliable version of that service is a proper deglaze and new IGU, not drilling holes. And if the phrase is simply "Double Glazing Repairs," remember the spectrum: from a ten-minute hinge tweak to a suite of new IGUs that make an old frame feel young again.

Take a calm, diagnostic approach. Check the symptoms, look for the simple culprits like drainage and gaskets, then invest in the fixes that last. Your house will feel warmer, the glass will look better, and your wallet will thank you for resisting the replace-everything reflex.