

Double glazed windows earn their keep in quiet, warm rooms and lower energy bills. When they misbehave, they can be frustrating and oddly stressful, especially if you are watching a foggy view and a rising heating bill. I have spent years on ladders and in living rooms dealing with stuck sashes, blown seals, and panes that whistle in a crosswind. The same questions come up again and again, and for good reason: the right decision can save hundreds, sometimes thousands, and keep your home comfortable without a full window replacement. Here is a practical guide, built from what actually goes wrong and how to put it right.

What counts as “double glazing,” and what actually fails?

A standard double glazed unit is two panes of glass separated by a spacer bar, sealed around the perimeter to create an insulating cavity. That cavity is often filled with argon, sometimes krypton on high-spec units, and the spacer usually contains a desiccant that mops up trace moisture. The unit then sits in a frame, timber, uPVC, aluminium, or a composite, and is held with beads, gaskets, and sealants. On more modern windows, warm-edge spacers and low-e coatings on the inner pane help control heat loss.

Most failures happen at the perimeter seal, not in the glass itself. UV light, thermal expansion, frame movement, and time conspire to lift or crack the sealant. Once the seal fails, air and moisture get into the cavity. The desiccant tries its best for a while, then becomes saturated. That is when misting appears between the panes and heat performance drops. Hinges, locks, and gaskets have their own life cycles and can go before or after the glazing unit does, which is why a professional will always diagnose the whole assembly rather than the glass alone.

Can you fix blown double glazing?

This is the question I get most on site. When people say “blown,” they usually mean a failed perimeter seal that allows misting inside the unit. You cannot reseal the original perimeter in a way that restores the argon fill and factory-level performance. The unit is a sealed system, manufactured under controlled conditions. Once that seal fails, the repair with the best long-term value is replacing the insulated glass unit, not the whole window.

There are services that drill the glass, vent the moisture, and add a valve or drying agent. These Misted Double Glazing Repairs can clear the fog for a while, and in specific cases, they are a reasonable stopgap. In my experience, they work best on older units you plan to replace anyway, or where access is awkward and you need a quick visual improvement. They do not restore the argon fill or the low-e integrity, so thermal performance remains compromised. A new sealed unit, ordered to size and spec, is the robust fix.

CST Double Glazing Repairs

4 Mill Ln

Cottesmore

Oakham

LE15 7DL

Phone: +44 7973 682562

Here is a simple way to think about it: if the window is visually important but you plan to replace it in two to three years, venting can buy time. If you want the u-value and condensation resistance back, budget for a new IGU. A well-made replacement unit should last 10 to 20 years, sometimes longer, assuming the frame is in decent condition and the drainage channels are kept clear.

How do I know if my unit is actually blown?

Not all condensation is created equal. Surface condensation on the room-facing pane is a ventilation problem, not a glazing failure. If you see beads of water you can wipe away from the inside surface, consider humidity sources: showers, drying clothes indoors, cooking without extraction. If you find it on the outside pane on chilly mornings, that often means the glazing is performing well, the outer surface is cold enough to condense dew.

The telltale of a failed unit is moisture trapped between the panes. You cannot touch it. It comes and goes with weather patterns but tends to persist after warm, wet spells. It often starts as faint arcs, like a crescent at the bottom corner, then grows into blotches and full misting. Another sign is a milky film that never fully clears, the desiccant has failed and left mineral deposits. If you see dust inside the cavity, the perimeter seal has been gone a long time.

A quick test: shine a torch at an angle in the evening. If the haze is inside the cavity, the light will illuminate it and you will see it float within the sandwich, not on a surface. If you have removable glazing beads, you can also check for failed gaskets and clogged drainage channels. Water sitting in the frame increases the internal humidity that feeds a failed unit, so keeping those weep holes clear protects your replacement investment.

What causes misted units in the first place?

Heat and movement do most of the damage. Sun-facing elevations expand and contract every day by a couple of millimetres. Over years, this pumps the seals. Poor installation accelerates the problem: no setting blocks, too much packer pressure, or beads that pinch the edge can stress the seal faster than normal. Strong solvents on the perimeter, such as aggressive mastic used during decorating, can degrade sealants. On timber frames, a lack of maintenance allows bowing or rot that twists the frame and breaks the seal.

Humidity plays a quiet role as well. Frames have drainage channels to let water out. When those are blocked with spider nests or paint, water stagnates near the edge of the unit. Constant moisture is hard on sealants. I have pulled more than a few units where the bottom quarter of the perimeter was blackened and crumbly, the top still sound. Treat the frame cavities like gutters, a quick clean once or twice a year makes a difference.

Does it always mean replacing the whole window?

No. Most Double Glazing Repairs are localized. If the frame is structurally sound and the hardware is serviceable or can be replaced, a new IGU is all you need. This is what keeps costs reasonable. A common job might be swapping a 28 mm argon-filled, low-e unit in a uPVC frame, reseating new gaskets, and checking hinges and locks. On a typical three-bed semi, I see average costs of 90 to 160 per standard casement unit for supply and fit, more for large or toughened panes, less if several are done at once. Full frame replacement can run five to ten times that, depending on style and material.

There are exceptions. Crumbling timber that no longer holds fixings, or aluminium frames with early thermal breaks that have failed, justify full replacement. If you want to change the appearance, for example to slim-profile heritage glazing or to add trickle vents across the house, then a whole-window upgrade makes sense. Most of the time, though, the frame stays and the glass changes.

Are DIY repairs realistic?

If you are comfortable with glazing beads and have the right suction cups, a square, and packers, you can replace an IGU yourself in uPVC or beaded aluminium. Timber is trickier because putty or glazing beads may be painted in,

and the risk of chipping the sash rises. The other risk is ordering the wrong spec. You need the cavity thickness, overall thickness, low-e coating position, any toughening requirements, gas fill, spacer color, and sometimes a specific acoustic or laminated build. Mis-measure by 2 mm and you will be forcing a unit or shimming a gap. Neither ends well.

The more dangerous mistake is removing a toughened or laminated pane from a door or side panel and replacing it with standard float glass. Building regulations exist for a reason. If you insist on DIY, replicate every marking and thickness you see on the original, and check the critical locations that require safety glass. Doors, low-level sidelights, and bathroom windows are not places to improvise.

Misted Double Glazing Repairs: do “drill and vent” methods really work?

They can clear the view, which is what most homeowners want first. The process involves drilling a small hole in one pane, or sometimes through the spacer, drawing out moist air and introducing drier air, then fitting a micro-valve so the cavity can equalize. If the unit is old with soft seals, the improvement can be striking and may last a couple of seasons. On newer units, I am less enthusiastic. You lose the argon fill and potentially weaken the pane with a hole. You also risk fine swarf or residue inside the cavity.

Where I have seen it make sense: rental properties that need to look crisp for a letting, or conservation areas where a like-for-like unit will take weeks to source and the owner needs a temporary lift. For long-term performance, it is a compromise. If you go this route, choose a contractor who is frank about the limitations and offers a modest guarantee on clarity, not on insulation.



How long should a double glazed unit last?

Good units tend to make 15 to 20 years before any visible failure. South-facing panes sometimes give up earlier, 8 to 12 years is not uncommon on poor-spec seals. North elevations and shaded sides can run 25 years and more. The frame material matters indirectly. uPVC with clogged drainage subjects the seal to damp and shortens life. Timber that is well painted and ventilated can be gentle on units; neglected timber is the opposite. Aluminium, especially modern thermal break designs with proper pressure plates, treats glazing kindly.



Quality at manufacture is the big swing factor. Warm-edge spacers with decent sealants, proper gas fill, and low-e coatings applied by reputable processors go the distance. Bargain-bin units, especially from unverified sources, save money upfront but cost twice over time. I have removed units that failed in three years because the desiccant was already saturated when installed.

Do repairs affect energy efficiency?

A new sealed unit restores the insulation values you expect. A typical 28 mm argon-filled low-e double glazed unit has a center-of-glass u-value around 1.1 to 1.2 W/m²K, whole-window values are higher because frames are less insulating. If your old unit lost its gas and fogged, you may have been living with a performance closer to 2.0 or worse. Homeowners often tell me a room feels warmer after a swap, not just because the glass performs, but because draughts and frame leaks are addressed at the same time.

Drill-and-vent treatments do not restore the argon or the precise moisture content. They can improve comfort slightly if the vented cavity behaves better than a swampy one, but the numbers will not match a factory-sealed replacement. If energy bills are your driver, the decision is straightforward: replace the IGU.

What about acoustic performance?

Sound insulation depends on mass, cavity depth, and asymmetry between panes. If you live near a road and the current unit is a basic 4-16-4 build, consider upgrading to 4-20-6 or a laminated inner pane when you replace. The cost uplift is modest but yields noticeable reduction in mid to high frequency noise. For low-frequency rumbles from buses or trains, thicker glass and larger cavities help. Acoustic upgrades work best when you also seal frame leaks and consider trickle vent design, otherwise the sound finds a shortcut.

Are there quick checks I can do before calling someone?

A short homeowner checklist helps you separate simple maintenance from genuine failure.

- Wipe the inside and outside panes to confirm the condensation is trapped in the cavity, not on a surface.
- Open the sashes and clear any debris from the frame drainage holes. Pour a small glass of water into the channel and confirm it weeps outside.

- Inspect gaskets for shrinkage at corners. If you see gaps, gently stretch and reseal them as a temporary measure.
- Test the hinges by opening the sash halfway and lifting gently. Excessive play suggests worn friction stays that can be replaced.
- Check for a draught with a strip of tissue on a breezy day. If it flutters near the bead line, the glazing tape or gaskets have failed locally.

If those steps do not resolve anything and the misting persists inside the cavity, you are into replacement or a specialist Misted Double Glazing Repairs option.

How much should I budget?

Prices vary by region and access, but there are ballpark figures that hold. For a straightforward casement-sized unit, say 600 by 900 mm, expect 80 to 140 for supply-only in standard low-e argon, and 120 to 200 fitted depending on volume and company overheads. Larger units, toughened glass, or shaped panes rise quickly, sometimes to 300 to 500. Doors and sidelights that must be toughened or laminated cost more again. If your frame needs hinge or lock work, add 40 to 120 per opening.

Multiple units reduce the per-piece cost because most of the time is in travel, setup, and measuring. I often advise homeowners to walk the house and list every suspect window, then ask for a consolidated quote. If you plan to sell in the next year, prioritise the worst offenders on public-facing elevations; buyers look there first.



Do I need permits or to meet building regulations?

Replacing like-for-like sealed units in existing frames usually does not require planning permission. Building regulations do apply to matters like safety glazing in critical locations, u-values in full window replacements, and ventilation compliance when you change frames. If you are only swapping the glass, you still need to match the safety spec. Installers in the UK often self-certify through schemes like FENSA or Certass for full window replacements. For glass-only, reputable firms will still document the spec and provide a warranty.

In conservation areas or listed buildings, you must tread carefully. Sometimes secondary glazing inside the room is the only permissible route. Other times, slender double glazing with heritage sightlines is allowed. Always check before committing to a large order, because bespoke units cannot be returned easily.

What about maintenance so I do not end up here again soon?

Think of windows as you would gutters and boilers: small routines prevent big bills. Clean the frame drainage paths once or twice a year. Avoid aggressive solvents on the perimeter sealant. Keep paint off gaskets and weep holes, and if you have timber, maintain a sound paint or stain finish, especially on horizontal sills where water sits.

Lubricate hinges with a light, non-sticky oil once a year and tighten handle screws that have worked loose. If you feel a draught after a particularly cold snap, inspect the gasket corners for shrinkage and have them replaced before winter.

When any builder or painter works around windows, ask what products they plan to use near the glass edge. Silicone compatibility matters. Some sealants attack the butyl in the spacer seal over time. A quick conversation prevents a long-term failure.

Is triple glazing worth it if I am replacing blown units?

If you are already touching the glass, triple glazing is tempting. It improves u-values on paper, but the gain in a mild climate is not always dramatic. The frame must accept the extra thickness and weight. Hinges and stays on older sashes may not like it, and sightlines change because the unit is deeper. I tend to recommend triple only on new frames designed for it, or in rooms where comfort is a real issue, north-facing bedrooms or areas with persistent cold spots. For many homes, a quality double glazed unit with warm-edge spacers and a good low-e coating brings most of the benefit for less cost and fewer compromises.

Are there signs that point to a frame issue, not the glass?

Yes, and they matter because they change the repair strategy. If you see staining or water marks on the internal plaster reveal near the sill, you might have a failed external seal or a missing end cap on a uPVC cill, letting rain drive under the frame. If sashes bind at the same corner on hot days, the frame could be out of square, caused by poor packing at installation. If you can move the sash relative to the frame by several millimetres, the hinges are worn, and the best glass in the world will still whistle in a gale. Deal with the frame and hardware first, then the glass. A holistic repair often saves you replacing the same unit again in a few years.

What should I ask a contractor before agreeing to the work?

A short, pointed set of questions will tell you if you have the right person.

- Will the replacement match the original spec for safety, coating, and spacer, and can you show the order details before production?
- How will you pack and support the unit in the frame to avoid stressing the seal?
- Are you replacing gaskets, and if so, with which profile and material?
- What is your guarantee on the sealed unit and on workmanship, and what voids it?
- How will you protect my flooring and decorate around the beads if they are tight or painted in?

You will learn more from the confidence and clarity of the answers than from the price alone. An installer who talks about setting blocks, toe-and-heeling on doors, and drainage paths is thinking about the whole system, not just a pane of glass.

When speed matters: practical triage

I often get called within a week of a house going on the market. The bathroom window is cloudy, and the estate agent has a viewing on Saturday. Priorities shift in these cases. If the unit is standard size and safety glass is not required, a local supplier can often turn it around in 48 to 72 hours for collection or fitting. If safety glass is required or the pane is large, lead times extend to five to ten working days because toughening is a separate process. For immediate optics, drill-and-vent might clear the view for photos, with a note to the buyer that a

replacement is on order. Transparency builds trust, and most buyers care that you have addressed it, not that you hid it.

Why some windows “fail” in winter even when the seals are fine

During cold spells, many homeowners notice misting that appears on the inside of the room pane in the morning and clears by midday. That is normal surface condensation from overnight humidity and cool surfaces, not a failed unit. The cure is ventilation and heat balance. Extractor fans, trickle vents slightly open, and avoiding drying laundry indoors without airflow makes a difference. If the [Cat Flap Installation](#) room surfaces are consistently cold, adding heavy curtains or blinds helps, but do not let them trap moisture against the pane all night; a small gap at the top prevents a cold pocket.

If you suspect the unit still performs but the room feels draughty, check for a cold air path around the frame perimeter. Expanding foam used at installation can shrink over time, leaving fine gaps. A careful application of frame-to-wall sealant externally, and decorator’s caulk internally, often makes a surprising difference. This is not a glazing fix, but it restores comfort.

Choosing between repair options: a simple decision path

Think of your situation in three questions. First, is the misting inside the cavity? If not, address ventilation and surface condensation. Second, is the frame sound and hardware serviceable? If yes, a new IGU is the smart move. If not, price the hardware fix in parallel and decide if the combined cost justifies a new window unit. Third, how long do you intend to keep the window? If you plan to upgrade the whole elevation in a couple of years, a temporary Misted Double Glazing Repairs solution may be enough. If you intend to live with it for a decade, invest in a quality sealed unit now.

Final thoughts from the ladder

The best results come from treating windows as systems. Glass, frame, gaskets, drainage, hinges, and installation practice all affect performance. You can Fix Blown Double Glazing in the common sense of restoring clarity and warmth, but the fix that lasts is usually a well-specified replacement IGU set into a frame that is clean, square, and well drained. The premium options, laminated acoustic glass or enhanced coatings, are worth it where your daily comfort benefits. The flashy add-ons are not always necessary.

I have pulled flawless 18-year-old units from frames that were rotting, and foggy three-year-old units from frames that looked pristine. The difference was almost always manufacturing quality and attention to the basics at installation. Measure carefully, specify properly, and keep the water moving out of the frame, not into it. If you hold to those, your next call for Double Glazing Repairs should be a long time coming.