Patio doors and French doors carry a lot of the home's workload. They frame the morning light, join the kitchen to a quiet garden, and open wide for summer evenings. When the double glazing in these doors starts to fail, you feel it fast. Draughts trace along the floor. The handle grows stiff. Condensation lingers in awkward corners. You can patch around the edges for a while, but sooner or later the doors need proper attention. The good news is that most problems are fixable without replacing the entire set of doors, and the work can be both precise and economical if approached with a bit of know-how.

What fails and why it tends to show up first on doors

Doors take more abuse than windows. They twist slightly as people push and pull. The hinges bear constant weight. The locking points yank the sash tight against the frame, and then relax again, day after day. Temperature swings hit doors hard too, especially south-facing patio sliders with full-height glass. This combination of movement, weight, and heat drives many common double glazing issues.

The usual suspects include dropped or misaligned sashes, worn rollers in sliding doors, failed perimeter seals on the double glazed unit, and tired locking gear. The symptoms can overlap, so it helps to watch closely. A door that catches on the threshold has an alignment or hinge problem. A door that glides but lets in a chill likely needs attention to the seals or glass unit. Persistent moisture between panes points to a failed insulated glazing unit, often called a blown unit.

The anatomy of a glazed door, minus the jargon

Most modern patio and French doors have a sash, which is the moving part carrying the glass, and a frame, fixed to the opening. Between the two sit gaskets that create an airtight and watertight seal when the door closes. The heart Misted Window Repairs of the system is the double glazed unit itself, two panes of glass separated by a spacer bar and sealed around the perimeter. Better units carry argon gas inside and use warm edge spacers to reduce heat loss.

On a French door, the locking mechanism is usually a multipoint strip that throws hooks or mushrooms into keeps along the frame. On sliding patio doors, a set of rollers carries the sash along a track, and an interlock where the panels meet keeps the weather out. Almost everything can be adjusted or replaced in isolation, provided you can identify where the failure sits.

First step: listen to the door and let it tell you what it needs

An experienced fitter will start with a simple routine. Open and close the door slowly. Feel for resistance. Watch the gaps around the edges. Look at the mitres in the corners of the sash. If they are separating or the beads are gapping away from the glass, you may have movement or glazing packers that have drifted. Check the handle throw. If you have to lift the door to lock it, that points to a dropped sash or worn hinge pins on a French door, or sagging rollers on a slider. Soft whisking noises along the jamb suggest perished gaskets.

I carry a 1 mm feeler gauge for this kind of survey, plus a moisture meter and a laser thermometer. The feeler gauge spots uneven gaps, the moisture meter helps confirm condensation patterns, and the thermometer shows cold edges that betray a compromised seal. None of this is exotic equipment, but it beats guessing.

Can you fix blown double glazing?

Yes, with a caveat. When people ask, Can you fix blown double glazing, they usually mean, can you repair the sealed unit so the misting goes away without buying a new one? Technically, you can drill, vent, and dry some units, and there are companies that offer this service. In practice, for doors that take heavy use and need the thermal performance, replacing the sealed unit is the stable long-term solution.

A blown unit has lost its perimeter seal. Moisture has crept into the cavity, which creates mist or visible beads inside the glass. Once the seal's integrity is gone, the insulating gas has usually escaped, and the spacer's desiccant is saturated. Venting and de-misting may clear the view temporarily, but it rarely restores the original U-value, and the cosmetic result can be hit or miss. For patio and French doors, where large glass areas dominate heat loss calculations, a new unit protects comfort and energy bills. If the budget is tight, weigh the cost difference: a replacement sealed unit is often a fraction of the price of a new door set, even for toughened or laminated glass.

Misted double glazing repairs for doors

Misted double glazing repairs fall into two buckets: replace the unit, or attempt a moisture extraction. For the reasons above, I recommend replacement on doors 9 times out of 10. The process is clean and fairly quick if the beads are cooperative and the sash hasn't twisted out of square. In many cases, you keep the existing frame, hardware, and aesthetic lines, but restore clarity and insulation.

The trick is measuring correctly. For glazed doors, I measure the visible glass, then account for the glazing pocket and packer thickness, and I confirm whether the glass must be toughened. If any edge of the glass sits within 800 mm of the finished floor, UK rules require safety glass, typically toughened. French door panes are often full height, so almost always toughened. Sliding doors nearly always use toughened glass for both panes. Laminated glass comes into play for security or acoustic reasons. Ordering the wrong spec costs time and money, so slow down and get it right.

Diagnosing draughts and cold spots that masquerade as glass failure

Not every cold patch stems from a blown unit. Gaskets crush over time. I have replaced countless gaskets on 10 to 15 year old doors that were still structurally sound. You can test this quickly with a strip of paper. Close the door on the paper and pull. If it slides out easily, your compression is weak at that point. Adjustment sometimes saves the day. On hinged French doors, hinge adjustments can lift and pull the sash to tighten the seal. On sliders, adjusting the roller height will align the interlocks, and fresh brush seals can eliminate whistling.

Another stealth culprit is trickle vents or even tiny gaps around the frame where the original installation foam has shrunk. A smoke pen shows air movement that your hand might miss. If you find air racing in from behind the trim, resealing the perimeter beats touching the glass.

The practical repair options, from light touch to full unit replacement

Here is a compact checklist of what typically works and where it applies.

- Adjust hinges or rollers to correct misalignment and restore even gasket pressure across the frame.
- Replace perimeter gaskets that have flattened, cracked, or shrunk at the corners.
- Repack the glass inside the sash to square the door and stop rubbing at the threshold.
- Replace failed sealed units when misting appears inside the cavity or the glass feels cold compared to adjacent panes.
- Service or replace multipoint locks and keeps to ensure a tight close without excessive handle force.

That small sequence often rescues doors that owners had written off. The packers, in particular, matter more than people think. On French doors, improper packing lets the sash sag and drags the lock side down. On sliders, poor packing senses as a wobble when you close the panel. When the glass carries the weight correctly, everything runs smoother.

What replacement actually looks like on site

On a beaded door, the beads clip out with care. I score along the gasket line first to prevent tearing. Suction cups make the heavy glass manageable; a full-height toughened pane can weigh 35 to 50 kg depending on thickness and size. Once the old unit is out, I clean the pocket thoroughly. Any grit left behind risks point-loading the new unit, which invites cracks later. Fresh setting blocks go at quarter points along the bottom, and side packers follow to keep the sash square. The idea is to support the glass evenly and keep the frame true.

When the new unit drops in, I check the diagonals of the sash. If one diagonal is longer, the sash is diamonded, not square, and the door will fight you during locking. Packing fixes this; add or subtract packers on the top corners until the diagonals match. With the beads reinstalled, I cycle the door several times, adjusting hinges or rollers so the latch enters cleanly and the weatherseals compress evenly. On sliders, I vacuum the track and inspect the drainage holes. Blocked weep holes cause water to pool in storms and find its way inside.

Cost ranges and what drives them

People often ask for exact numbers over the phone, and I try to give honest ranges that account for unknowns. A straightforward gasket replacement on a pair of French doors might sit in the low hundreds, including labor and materials. A new toughened double glazed unit for a full-height door panel tends to fall in the mid hundreds, higher if the glass needs laminated spec or solar control coatings. Multipoint lock replacements vary wildly because some brands are discontinued, but expect a similar range, especially if the keeps in the frame also need changing.

Sliders can be a little more, mainly due to glass size and the occasional need for two fitters to handle the panel safely. Travel, access, and bespoke finishes can add to the bill. If someone quotes a price that barely covers the likely glass cost, ask what spec they are supplying. A cheaper aluminum spacer in place of a warm edge spacer, or standard float glass instead of low-e, might explain the difference.

When you should consider full door replacement

Most of the time, repair or glass replacement is the smart move. Still, I advise replacement in a handful of cases. If the uPVC frame has warped or the timber frame is rotten, pouring money into glass and locks won’t stop the creeping problems. Extremely old aluminum sliders with single-track drainage and basic brushes may never seal as well as modern systems. If your doors are more than 20 years old and require multiple major components, the maths sometimes favors a new, efficient door set with better U-values and modern security hardware. But do the comparison carefully. If the frames are square and stable, a fresh set of units and seals can give another decade of service at a fraction of replacement cost.

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French doors versus sliding doors: different failure patterns

French doors rely on alignment and locking compression. When they drop, the meeting stile goes out of true. The handle then needs muscle to lift, the bottom corner rubs the threshold, and the latch misaligns. The remedies focus on hinges, packing, and lock strip adjustments. The glass units themselves fail at about the same rate as on windows, but the stress from opening and closing can hasten a tired seal.

Sliding doors accumulate grit and wear rollers. You feel this as a grind or a bump once per rotation of a damaged wheel. People sometimes respond by pulling harder, which bends the interlock and compromises the weatherseal. It becomes a cascade. A good service stops the cycle: new rollers, cleaned track, adjusted interlock, fresh brushes or seals if needed. If the misting sits inside the glass, treat it like any other blown unit and replace it.

Safety and handling, because door glass is not like picture glass

Door glass is heavy, and toughened glass behaves differently from annealed. If it fails, it breaks into small cubes, which is safer once on the floor but gives no warning before it goes. Avoid prying directly against the glass edge with metal tools. Always support the panel evenly when removing or installing, and use proper suction cups. If you are tackling a DIY job, know your limits. Two people should handle full-height units. Protect the threshold with a dense foam strip to avoid chipping the lower edge as you tilt the panel into place.

Energy performance gains you actually feel

Replacing a failed unit with modern low-e, argon-filled glass can make a noticeable difference in a room with large doors. Homeowners often remark that the floor near the threshold no longer feels cold, and the thermostat cycles less frequently on windy days. If your doors are in a sun trap, consider a solar control option, not to dim the space but to reduce peak summer heat gain. It is a balancing act: too dark and winter feels dreary, too clear and summer becomes stuffy. A good supplier can show g-values and visible light transmission numbers so you can choose sensibly.

Small preventative habits that extend the life of your doors

I have been back to the same homes years later and seen doors still closing like new, mainly because the owners adopted simple care routines. Vacuum the tracks on sliders every month or two, especially if you have pets or live near trees. Wipe rubber gaskets with a damp cloth and a mild, non-solvent cleaner. A light silicone wipe once or twice a year keeps them supple. Check the screws on hinge plates and handle backplates; if you see polish marks or tiny rust blooms, dry the area and touch in the screw heads. Operate the multipoint lock fully, handle lifted all the way before turning the key, to avoid half-latching that wears keeps and cam followers.

When misting is not misting, and other misreads

Sometimes a homeowner points to condensation on the inside face of the inner pane and fears the unit is blown. That moisture can come from indoor humidity if cooking, showers, and drying clothes raise moisture levels. You can test this by cracking the door for a minute, running the extractor fan, and watching the pattern change. If the fog wipes away from the room side, your unit is probably fine. Conversely, faint hazy bands around the perimeter of the inner cavity that never wipe off often indicate the start of seal failure. Catching it early does not save the unit, but it helps you plan.

Another common misread: a faint rattle or buzz at the meeting rails during wind. People assume the glass is loose, but the cause is often a worn latch keep or an out-of-adjustment mushroom cam. A small turn on the cam to increase compression settles the noise.

What to ask a repair company before you book

Choosing a competent tradesperson matters more than the brand on the van. A short conversation can reveal a lot. Ask whether they will measure the glass from bead to bead, confirm safety glass requirements, and check for warm edge spacers. Ask how they plan to support and pack the unit on installation. Inquire about gasket replacement versus reuse. For locks and hinges, ask the make and model they propose and whether parts are available locally. Good fitters welcome these questions. They know that a neat job reduces callbacks and keeps a door performing well.

Timelines and living with the repair

From survey to installation, a standard toughened sealed unit usually arrives in 5 to 10 working days, depending on the supplier. Laminated or special coatings can add a few days. The on-site work to swap a unit in a French door often takes around an hour per leaf, a bit more for sliders because of the panel size and access. Gasket swaps run quicker. Lock changes vary by brand, but most fall inside a morning’s work. You can keep using the doors during the lead time unless the failure is structural or a safety issue. If a pane is cracked, especially in toughened glass where the crack can wander unpredictably, I advise minimizing use until replacement.

A few real-world examples

A couple in a 12-year-old house called about “frosted” patio doors. The units were misted, but the bigger problem was a bowed sash caused by missing packers. We replaced the units with low-e, argon-filled, warm edge spec, then repacked correctly and adjusted the rollers. Their heating use dropped noticeably during a cold snap, and the grinding sound on closing disappeared.

Another job involved a set of timber French doors where the right leaf rubbed the sill and the lock needed a forceful lift. The glass was fine. We tightened the hinge adjustments, swapped in new compression gaskets, and moved the keeps by 2 mm. The handle lifted with two fingers afterwards, and draughts at the meeting stile vanished. No glass needed, and the cost sat comfortably below what they had feared.

One more case from a coastal home: sliders with repeated water ingress during storms. The units were slightly misted at the corners, but the main culprit was blocked drainage and a distorted interlock that let water drive inward. After clearing the weep holes, straightening and adjusting the interlock, and replacing the worst unit, the doors stayed dry through the next gale.

Final guidance if you are weighing repair options

If you can see moisture inside the cavity of the glass, plan for a replacement sealed unit. If the door is hard to operate, start with alignment and hardware checks before blaming the glass. If you feel a chill along the edges, inspect gaskets and compression points with a simple paper test. For sliding doors, never ignore a grinding roller. It will not heal, and the extra force damages other parts.

Misted double glazing repairs and general Double Glazing Repairs are most effective when they treat the correct cause. Replacing a unit in a twisted sash only postpones the call-back. Likewise, tightening a lock on perished gaskets trades a draught for a stiff handle. The work is not glamorous, but done carefully, it restores the feel of a well-made door: a smooth swing or glide, a firm click into place, clear views, and steady comfort.

If you have been staring through fogged panes or nudging a reluctant handle each morning, you do not have to live with it. A focused repair, planned with a practical eye, brings those doors back to the job they were built to do, opening that threshold to light, air, and easy passage without wasting energy or patience.