

Double glazing should be the quiet hero of a comfortable home. When it is working, you rarely think about it. Rooms hold their heat, street noise softens, and the glass stays clear. When it is not, you notice. The usual giveaway is a stubborn fog trapped inside the unit. You wipe the interior pane, then the exterior, and the mist barely changes. That is not surface condensation, it is moisture between panes, and it often signals a blown unit in need of attention.

I have spent years around windows, from surveying draughty Victorian terraces to troubleshooting modern UPVC installs that were just a few seasons old. The patterns repeat. People delay repairs because the window still locks and the draughts feel manageable. Energy bills climb a little. The view grows hazy. Eventually the penny drops: the glazing has failed, and it is robbing comfort and money each day it sits fogged.

This guide unpacks what is happening inside a double glazed unit, why condensation forms between panes, how to judge whether repair or replacement makes sense, and the methods professionals use to deal with misted units. It also answers a question I hear every week: can you fix blown double glazing, or do you have to replace it? Spoiler, sometimes repair is viable, but replacement of the sealed unit is often the smarter long-term move.

What double glazing is actually doing

A double glazed unit is a sealed sandwich of two panes of glass separated by a spacer bar. The cavity, usually 12 to 20 mm wide, is filled with a gas, commonly argon in domestic windows. The spacer bar is lined with desiccant, a thirsty material that mops up residual moisture trapped during manufacturing. The edges are sealed with butyl and a secondary sealant to keep out ambient air and moisture.

When intact, the unit slows heat transfer in three ways. The two **Double Glazing Repairs** panes reduce conductive heat loss. The still gas layer reduces convective loops. The low-emissivity coating on one pane reflects infrared heat back into the room. Done right, a typical A-rated double glazed unit can bring a whole window's U-value down to roughly 1.2 to 1.6 W/m²K, depending on frame and spacer. That is the difference between a warm lounge and a chilly one when the wind is up.

If you see condensation between the panes, that sealed environment is no longer sealed. Moisture from ambient air has found its way into the cavity. The desiccant has saturated and can no longer keep the gas dry, so water vapor condenses on the cooler internal surfaces, making the mist you see.

How units fail and why condensation appears

Most failures come down to the edge seal. Sunlight, temperature swings, and building movement work parts loose over time. UV light can degrade sealants on units with insufficient edge cover. Spacer bars can bridge cold at the perimeter, especially older aluminum ones, and repeated thermal cycling can flex seals a hair until they crack. Even a small breach is enough. Moisture moves relentlessly from humid air toward dry spaces, and a unit with desiccant is a magnet for it.

I have seen three common patterns:

- Early seal failure within a few years of installation. Often linked to manufacturing defects or poor handling during fitting, especially when frames were packed badly and the units carried stress on the corners.
- Mid-life failure around the 8 to 12 year mark. Typical for older UPVC or when units face strong sun all afternoon. The south and west elevations usually go first.

- End-of-life failure beyond 15 years. Not surprising for standard double glazing that has lived a busy life in a draughty house. Triple glazing and warm-edge spacers tend to hold out longer, but nothing lasts forever.

There are also user-side factors. If you keep blinds tight to the glass, the interior pane runs colder and can encourage edge condensation and slow seal deterioration. Aggressive cleaning on frames with pointed tools can nick seals. Building movement, especially in houses with new extensions or after underpinning, can tweak the square of a frame and strain the unit.

Telling surface condensation from a blown unit

I always ask people to check a few quick signs before we talk repairs. Surface condensation appears on the room-side when the interior air is humid and the inside pane is cold. This is common in kitchens, bathrooms, and bedrooms after a night with the door closed. If a cloth clears it and the view is fine once it dries, the unit is probably sound, and the issue is ventilation or thermal performance, not a failed seal.

Moisture inside the cavity looks different. It can be a hazy veil that never wipes away. In more humid spells you might see droplets wandering between the panes or distinct streaks. Some units show a dirty tide mark at the bottom of the cavity where dust has mixed with condensed moisture. On sunny days, the fog might shift or fade as temperature changes push water vapor to the cooler pane, which confirms there is real vapor movement inside the unit.

A simple torch test helps. At night, hold a small flashlight close to the interior pane and move it across. With double glazing, you will see multiple reflections. If the misting lives between panes, those reflections look fuzzy no matter which side you clean.

Does misting affect energy performance?

Yes, and not in a subtle way. When a unit loses its seal, two things happen. The argon leaks out over time, and moist air moves in. Argon improves thermal resistance by about 30 percent compared to air. Lose it, and you are back to air or a mix. The saturated desiccant cannot remove that moisture, so it stays available to condense on cold surfaces. The visual fog tells you the cavity is no longer functioning as designed. Expect more heat loss, colder interior pane temperatures, and a higher chance of surface condensation inside the room around the edges of the glass.

I have tested homes before and after replacing a batch of misted units. Homeowners often report a 1 to 2 degree Celsius improvement in perceived room temperature at the same thermostat setting, especially in rooms with large glazed areas. You also get your view back, which matters more than people admit. Living behind a smudged lens affects how a space feels.

Can you fix blown double glazing?

The short answer is sometimes, but the quality of the fix varies. When people ask can you fix blown double glazing, they usually mean can we eliminate the fog without replacing the whole window. The frame, hardware, and trims are separate from the sealed glass unit. In many cases you can keep the frame and replace just the glass unit. That is the most durable repair, and it is what I recommend nine times out of ten.



There are also repair techniques that aim to restore clarity by venting, drying, and resealing the existing unit. These are commonly marketed as misted double glazing repairs. The process typically involves drilling tiny holes in the glass, flushing the cavity with dry air or alcohol, leaving in a desiccant plug, then fitting one-way vents or sealing the holes with clear plugs. Results range from surprisingly decent to short-lived. The underlying edge seal is still compromised, and environmental moisture will try to return. If cost is the only driver and you need to buy a couple of years, this can work on certain units. For higher performance and lasting value, replacement of the sealed unit remains the better path.

When repair makes sense, and when to replace

I break decisions into three categories: age and exposure, frame condition, and performance goals.

If the unit is relatively new, say under five years, and still under warranty, go back to the installer or manufacturer. Reputable companies stand behind their sealed units for 5 to 10 years, sometimes longer for premium products. Document the misting with date-stamped photos, check your paperwork, and insist on a like-for-like replacement unit.

If the frames are sound and you like how the window looks and operates, replacing just the sealed unit hits the sweet spot. You get a factory-sealed cavity, new warm-edge spacer, fresh argon fill, and a low-E coating that may be better than your original. Expect to pay roughly a third to half of the cost of a fully new window, depending on size and glazing spec. In practical terms, a standard casement unit might run from £90 to £180 per pane in many UK regions, with larger or shaped units costing more. Prices vary widely by location and supplier, but unit-only replacement is usually cost-effective.

If the frames are warped, the sashes do not close cleanly, or the gaskets have perished, replacing glass alone is like putting new tires on a car with a bent axle. You can do it, but you will chase leaks and drafts. In that case, a full window replacement can be a smarter investment. You can upgrade to better frame insulation, modern trickle vents where allowed, and a clean, warrantied assembly.

For south and west exposures, or rooms you heat the most, consider stepping up the spec during replacement. Toughened or laminated glass for safety and sound, low-E coatings tuned for solar gain, and argon or krypton fills can make a noticeable difference. Triple glazing is also an option, though it adds weight and cost, and it needs a frame designed to accept the thicker unit.

What professionals actually do during repairs

Replacing a sealed unit sounds simple in theory. In practice, three details drive success: accurate measurement, proper glazing packers, and a meticulous seal.

Once the unit is measured, we order the replacement to the exact sightline, spacer thickness, and coatings needed. On installation day, beads come off carefully to avoid cracking them, then we release the old unit. We check the drainage paths in the frame, clear any debris, and set rigid packers at the correct points to support the unit without twisting it. The aim is an even 2 to 5 mm clearance around, consistent with the frame system. Units are heavy, so they go in square and seated. Beads are tapped back with care, and if the frame uses external glazing, security tapes or clips get renewed. The last step is a gentle clean, making sure no sealant smears the low-E surface.

For drill-and-dry repairs, a technician will mark a top and bottom corner for micro-holes. The lower hole allows drainage and flushing, the upper hole vents humid air. After flushing with isopropyl or a proprietary rinse, they may leave a desiccant plug to keep mopping residual moisture. Clear breathable plugs or valves close the holes. You can watch the mist fade over hours to days. This method saves on glass but has clear limitations. If a unit fogged because the spacer seal failed badly, moisture will return with seasonal swings.

CST Double Glazing Repairs

4 Mill Ln

Cottesmore

Oakham

LE15 7DL

Phone: +44 7973 682562

Safety and pitfalls

Glass is unforgiving. One slip with a scraper, one twist with the wrong packer, and you can crack a new unit during installation. I advise homeowners against removing beads or drilling glass unless they know the system and have blanks to practice on. Toughened glass has a surface that holds tension. Drill it and you risk a spontaneous shatter

that leaves you sweeping marbles of glass from the lawn. Laminated panes can be drilled carefully, but they look messy if you do not know what you are doing.

There is also the matter of coatings. Low-E surfaces can scuff with abrasive cloths or certain cleaners. If you must clean the inner surfaces during a drill-and-dry procedure, use lint-free cloths and be careful where the coated surface sits in the unit. Most modern units position the low-E coating on surface 3, counting from the outside. That places it inside the cavity, safe from domestic cleaning, but vulnerable during open-cavity works.

A practical way to decide today

If you want a clear plan, walk the house and note each suspect window. Two photos per unit help, one close with the mist visible, one wide to show location. Record rough sizes by measuring visible glass width and height, then add 10 to 20 mm as a guide for overall unit size. That is enough for a glazier to price ballpark figures over the phone. Ask for separate pricing on supply-only and fitted units if you have a supplier you trust. If any windows struggle to close or show blackened gaskets, flag those for deeper checks.

I often suggest tackling windows in order of impact. Start with rooms you use daily or where glazing gives the biggest heat loss. A misted patio door can feel like leaving a small window open all day. Replacing that unit first yields immediate comfort and visual improvement. Bedrooms that suffer from morning condensation benefit not just from new glazing, but from better ventilation habits. Crack a window briefly each morning, keep furniture a few centimeters off exterior walls, and use extractor fans faithfully in kitchens and baths.

Warranty, standards, and what to expect from a quote

Good installers issue paperwork that covers the sealed units for at least 5 years, often 10. Keep it. When you request quotes for double glazing repairs, a professional should specify the glass thickness, spacer, gas fill, coating type, and whether the unit will carry a warm-edge spacer. Ask for clarity on lead times. Most factories turn standard rectangles around in 5 to 10 working days. Shaped or toughened units take longer.

If you are in a regulated jurisdiction, confirm whether the work needs sign-off. Swapping a like-for-like sealed unit generally does not trigger Building Regulations approvals, but full window replacements do. A FENSA, Certass, or similar scheme installer can self-certify. This matters when you sell the house.

Expect a clean site. Reputable fitters protect floors, lay out a safe glass stand, and leave no shards behind. If you have pets or children, plan for a room-by-room schedule rather than the whole house at once. Glass handling can be noisy and disruptive, but a competent team will change several units in a morning with minimal fuss.

The drill-and-vent method in more detail

People are curious about the drill-and-vent approach because it promises lower cost and fast clarity. It works best on moderate fogging where the spacer seal has a small breach, and on units located under shelter where wind-driven rain is less aggressive. The idea is to equalize humidity, allow trapped moisture to escape, and leave enough desiccant to mop small inflows.

Time plays a role. On a cool, dry day, the mist may clear quickly after drilling. On muggy days, results are slower and can backslide. Once the unit is vented, you will likely see less fog during cold snaps, but the double glazing no longer behaves as a sealed, gas-filled insulation layer. Think of it as a stopgap that improves visibility more than thermal performance.

If a contractor proposes this route, ask three questions. How long do they expect the clarity to last? What happens if the unit shatters during drilling? And will they guarantee against re-misting for a defined period? Honest answers usually point toward unit replacement if you plan to stay in the home for several winters.

Avoiding future misting

You cannot change the weather or the sun path, but you can choose better components. Warm-edge spacers, usually made from composite materials, reduce the cold bridge at the perimeter, which helps seal longevity. A reputable manufacturer with consistent quality control matters more than the badge on the van. I prefer units that list the gas fill percentage and include batch records. If a supplier dodges questions about specifications, move on.



Consider small habits. Use trickle vents or brief purge ventilation to keep interior humidity in check, especially during winter. Shower steam, drying laundry indoors, and simmering pots all add moisture that eventually finds cold surfaces. A relative humidity between 40 and 55 percent strikes a good balance for comfort and reduced condensation risk.

Frames matter too. UPVC benefits from periodic gasket checks and hinge lubrication. Timber frames need proper paint cycles to keep water out of glazing rebates. Aluminum frames rely on clear drainage paths. I have taken apart sashes with perfectly good units, ruined only because standing water pooled in the rebate and attacked the seal edges. Keep weep holes clear with a cotton bud and a dash of patience.

A quick homeowner checklist

- Confirm it is cavity condensation by wiping both sides and using a torch test at night.
- Check paperwork for warranties, especially if the windows are under 10 years old.
- Decide if frames are worth keeping. If yes, replace the sealed unit rather than the whole window.
- For stopgap savings, consider a drill-and-dry repair, understanding its limitations.
- Reduce indoor humidity to protect both new and existing glazing.

What misleads people about costs

I have seen quotes that look attractively low, only for the final bill to creep up with extras: toughened glass surcharges, oversized handling charges, disposal fees for old units, and access costs for second-floor installs. When comparing prices, make sure the quotes include like for like specifications: glass thickness, safety rating for doors and low-level windows, spacer type, and gas fill. A cheap air-filled unit with an aluminum spacer undercuts a proper argon-filled warm-edge one, but you will pay for that difference on your energy bill and comfort.

On the flip side, do not assume every misted unit needs a premium spec. North-facing small bathroom windows, for example, may not benefit from the most expensive low-E combination. Put the performance investment where you feel and pay for it, such as living rooms, kitchens, and large bedroom windows.

Real-world examples

A family in a 1990s semi called me about their fogged patio sliders and two front bedroom windows. The frames were decent, no draught complaints, but the view to the garden had turned milky. We measured the units, ordered argon-filled replacements with warm-edge spacers and a soft-coat low-E. The patio door unit was large, around 2 square meters, and cost about £260 supplied and fitted. Each bedroom casement unit was about £120. We swapped all three in a morning. On a windy weekend that followed, they told me the living area felt less chilly at ankle height, a subtle but important change that matches what we see when the interior pane runs warmer.

Contrast that with a third-floor flat where drilling was chosen to avoid the logistics of craning large units over a narrow stair. The technician cleared the fog, and it stayed clear for a year. The next winter, after persistent heavy rain on the west side, the haze returned. In that case, we eventually replaced the units during external redecorations when scaffolding was already up, which kept access costs down. Timing matters as much as method.

Answering the big questions plainly

Misted double glazing repairs are possible, and in certain circumstances they deliver acceptable results for a short to medium term. If your priority is a long-lasting fix with restored energy performance, replacing the sealed unit is the reliable route. You generally do not need to replace the entire window unless the frame is compromised or you want a wholesale upgrade.

So, can you fix blown double glazing? Yes, but define fix. Clearing the fog via venting is a partial fix that restores visibility more than insulation. Replacing the sealed unit is a full fix that restores both.

Getting it sorted without headaches

Start with clarity on scope. Identify which units are misted and decide if you are keeping the frames. [Misted Window Repairs](#) Gather basic sizes and photos, then seek two or three quotes that specify glass type, spacer, gas, and lead time. Expect a tidy, half-day visit for a handful of units. If you live in a coastal or very sunny area, ask the glazier to recommend a spacer and sealant system that resists UV and salt better than standard.

Finally, do not wait too long. A fogged unit does more than spoil the view. It cools the room, nudges heating costs upward, and can encourage surface condensation nearby, which invites mold if left unchecked. Double glazing should quietly support your home. If it is calling attention to itself with a dull white haze, it is time to act.