

If you live with double glazed windows long enough, you get a feel for what “right” looks like. Clear view, calm rooms, the soft thud when you close the sash. When a unit blows, that feel disappears in small ways first. I’ve spent years looking at fogged panes, warped spacers, and tired seals, and most of the expensive failures started as quiet, early signs. Catching those early saves money, heat, and a fair amount of frustration.

This guide walks through what blown double glazing actually means, what you’ll see and feel when things start to go wrong, and how to judge whether you need minor maintenance, targeted Misted Double Glazing Repairs, or a full glass replacement. I’ll fold in a few field notes from real jobs because glazing behaves a bit like people, it tends to fail in patterns and for reasons.

What “blown” double glazing really means

A double glazed unit is two panes separated by a sealed cavity, usually filled with dry air or an inert gas like argon. Around the perimeter, a spacer bar holds the gap and houses desiccant to absorb moisture. A primary seal bonds the glass to the spacer, and a secondary seal protects the assembly from weather and movement. When people say a unit is blown, they mean the edge seal has failed, so outside air and moisture have entered that cavity. Once moisture gets in, the desiccant saturates and you see haze or beads of condensation between the panes.

Blown doesn’t mean your frame is ruined or the glass is cracked. It means the insulated glass unit has lost its hermetic seal. The frame may be fine. In many cases, you can replace just the glazed unit, not the whole window. That matters because the cost difference is often two to four times.

How to spot early warning signs before misting sets in

The classic symptom is fogging between panes. You’ll see it on cold mornings, especially after a warm shower or when the kettle’s been on. But by the time fog is obvious, the seal has usually been compromised for months. Early signs tend to be subtler:

- Iridescent tide marks. Look at the glass at an angle when the sun is low. You might spot faint streaks or an arc near the bottom edge, a bit like a petrol sheen on water. That’s mineral residue from evaporated moisture inside the cavity, a very early clue.



- Tired edges. Inspect the border of the unit where glass meets frame. If you see a fine dusting of white near the spacer, or the black primary seal looks rippled rather than smooth, the sealant is drying out or delaminating. I carry a pen light for this and angle the beam across the edge.
- Draughts without obvious gaps. You won't get airflow through the glass, but you might feel the room cool unevenly. A blown unit loses insulating value, so the pane runs colder and creates a downdraft. If you notice a chill near one particular window even when vents are closed, that's a flag.
- Condensation patterns on the room side. Normal life creates steam. Healthy double glazing tends to fog evenly on the inner surface then clears quickly. A failing unit often shows patchy condensation that lingers in one corner, typically where the seal first goes.
- Insect life inside the frame. On timber and older uPVC frames, ants or small spiders sometimes set up near a compromised seal where micro gaps appear. The bugs aren't entering the cavity, but their presence points to movement in the edge seal.

I've seen all five on units that looked fine to most owners. Spotting them early can keep you ahead of a winter of steamed-up views and climbing energy bills.

Distinguishing blown units from normal condensation

A lot of homeowners ring up for Double Glazing Repairs after a cold snap because their panes are covered in droplets. Most of the time it isn't blown glass, it's just indoor humidity meeting a cooler surface. The quick test is location. If condensation sits on the room-facing surface and you can wipe it away with a towel, your seals could be perfect and the house just needs better ventilation or a tweak to heating rhythms. If condensation sits between the panes and you cannot touch it, that's a failed seal.

Season and room use matter. Kitchens and bathrooms will fog up when you cook or shower. Bedrooms fog on winter mornings if the door stayed shut all night. If you only see moisture in those situations and it clears fast, that's normal. If the same pane mists in July, with no cooking or showering, that's different. Blown units often show hazy bloom in mild weather because the cavity holds damp air year-round.

Why units fail in the first place

After thousands of units, patterns emerge. The causes aren't mysterious, just cumulative.

Sealant age and chemistry. Most units are built to last between 10 and 20 years. The primary butyl seal does the air-tight work, and the secondary seal, often polysulfide or polyurethane, provides durability. Exposure to UV, heat cycling, and frame movement slowly exhausts these. South-facing elevations and dark frames that run hotter tend to fail earlier.

Spacer bar type and quality. Older aluminum spacers conduct heat into the sealant, forcing more thermal movement and encouraging condensation around the edges. Modern warm-edge spacers help, but low-quality beads of desiccant or poor corner joints still give out sooner. I've replaced bargain units that misted in six years, while decent ones from the late 1990s still soldier on.

Installation stresses. A unit needs even compression and proper packers to keep the weight off the glass edges. If packers are missing, the sash bows the frame and twists the unit. Two or three winters later, edge seals crack. Silicone smeared on after the fact won't fix that structural strain.

Drainage and blocked weep holes. uPVC frames have little channels to shed water. When those block with debris or paint over, moisture sits against the secondary seal for months, accelerating failure. I've cleared weep holes on windows that looked blown, waited two weeks, and watched the symptoms ease. It doesn't undo a failed seal, but it can stop further frame moisture problems.

Building movement and weather. Subsidence, new lintels, aggressive pressure washing, and even a slamming sash all add up. During the 2018 cold wave in the UK, I replaced more units in one spring than the previous three years because the deep freeze then thaw jolted older seals.

The cost of waiting

A misted pane doesn't shatter or leak rain into the lounge. The damage is quieter. First, heat loss. A blown unit loses much of its insulating value, especially around the edge. You feel it as a cool patch and you pay for it on the bill. Expect a typical 1.0 by 1.2 metre blown unit to add a few percent to the room's heating demand. Two or three in the same space and you start nudging the thermostat up.

Second, frame health. The extra moisture that travels through a failed seal can soak into timber beads or sit against gaskets. Timber sills begin to blacken and soften. On uPVC, gaskets perish faster and can pull away from corners. I've replaced units that took their timber beads with them because rot set in. That turns a glass job into a joinery job.

Third, visibility and property appeal. A constantly fogged pane shrinks the room and spoils the view. Sellers underestimate how quickly a buyer notices this. I've handled several pre-sale jobs where replacing three or four blown units improved the survey and the first impressions by an outsized margin.

Can you Fix Blown Double Glazing without replacing the glass?

This question comes up on almost every survey. People see adverts for hole-drilling, vented plugs, or "defogging" services and hope for a quick rescue. Let's separate what's possible from what lasts.

Drill-and-vent methods. A technician drills a small hole in the outer pane, sprays in a cleaning solution, then plugs the hole with a vent. The moisture evaporates, and the misting clears. I've seen this "work" for a season or two, especially in dry climates. The problem is the insulating unit is no longer sealed. You've traded mist for lower thermal performance and a higher chance of dirt or future moisture. In many regions this approach voids any remaining warranty and may not meet building regs for energy performance if used widely.

Seal re-edging. Some companies apply a fresh secondary seal around the perimeter. If the failure is strictly in the outer sealant and the primary seal and desiccant are intact, you can buy a couple of years. That's a big if. On units that are already misted, the desiccant is usually saturated. You can't dry it out without opening the unit.

Re-gassing. You'll see claims about refilling argon in place. Without a factory environment, it's more marketing than engineering. The unit's integrity is gone, and a squirt of gas won't stay for long.

The honest answer from years of Double Glazing Repairs is that long-term fixes usually involve replacing the insulated glass unit (IGU) within the existing frame. The frame stays, the beads come off, the old unit is measured and removed, and a new A-rated, warm-edge, low-E unit goes in. Done well, this addresses both the mist and the thermal loss. Turnaround is typically 7 to 14 days from survey to fit because units are made to measure.

So, can you Fix Blown Double Glazing? Yes, in the practical sense: you resolve the problem by fitting [Double Glazing Repairs](#) a new sealed unit. If you want a true repair without replacement glass, understand it's either short-term or compromises performance. I've offered drill-and-vent as a temporary measure in a few edge cases, like a listed building waiting for planning approval, but I always label it as a stopgap.

Practical checks you can do this week

If you suspect a window is heading toward failure, you can run a few simple checks before calling anyone out. Keep it safe and avoid leaning out of upstairs openings.

- The coin test. Tap near each corner with a coin. Healthy units give a uniform ring. A unit with edge damage or desiccant saturation sometimes sounds dull in one corner. It isn't definitive, but it pairs well with visual clues.
- Back-of-hand temperature sweep. On a cool day, run the back of your hand around the glass perimeter inside the room. A noticeably colder band near one edge compared with other windows hints at a compromised seal or thermal bridge through the spacer.
- Spacer look-up. Peer at the spacer bar. Good units often have the manufacturer and a date code. If your home had windows installed 12 to 15 years ago and one or two are misting, the rest are at similar lifespan. Plan budget accordingly.
- Gasket rebound. Press the inner rubber gasket gently with a fingernail and release. If it stays compressed and doesn't spring back, it's perished. While this alone doesn't blow a unit, it lets moisture sit and stresses the seal.

- Vent and weep check. Open trickle vents and clear visible weep holes with a plastic coffee stirrer or cotton bud. You'd be surprised how often this improves general condensation and reveals whether misting is truly in the cavity or simply poor ventilation.

These take minutes and can help you talk clearly with a repair firm about what you're seeing.

When to call for Misted Double Glazing Repairs

Once you see moisture between panes or the view looks milky, it's time. Early autumn is ideal because glazing lead times are steady and you'll head into winter with full insulation. If you're already in January, don't wait. A few weeks with a blown unit isn't catastrophic, but running a season with three misted panes in a living room costs more in heat than the replacement glass.

A good repair visit looks like this. The surveyor measures visible glass size and the rebate, notes the spacer thickness, low-E coating side, and any glazing bars. They check frame condition and packer layout, and they photograph or label each sash so the factory builds accurate replacements. On fit day, beads come off carefully, the sash is cleaned, new packers are placed to support the weight correctly, and the new unit is bedded, clipped, and sealed. The whole swap for a standard casement is often under an hour per unit.

Expect prices to vary by region and unit spec. As a rough guide, in many UK towns, a small casement unit might run £90 to £140 supplied and fitted, rising to £200 to £350 for larger or toughened safety glass. Triple glazing, integral blinds, or Georgian bars add cost. Timber frames often take longer and may need new beads.

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Choosing repair versus replacement windows

Sometimes a blown unit is the nudge to consider full window replacement, especially if you've got single-chamber 1990s uPVC with tired seals, rattly hardware, and poor security. The decision comes down to frame health, comfort goals, and budget.

If frames are square, sashes close crisply, and you like the look, new glazed units deliver most of the energy benefit at a fraction of the cost. Upgrading to low-E soft-coat, argon fill, and warm-edge spacers can drop the centre-of-glass U-value from around 2.8 W/m²K on old units to around 1.2 to 1.0 W/m²K on new ones. You feel that immediately in winter.

If frames are warped, beads are brittle, or the locking points are a chore, payback tilts toward full windows. I've pulled units where the glass was fine, but the hinge geometry wasted heat and leaked air. A new frame with modern gaskets and multi-point locks can outperform any glazed-only fix. When budgets are tight, prioritize the worst rooms first. Bedrooms and lounges yield the most comfort per pound spent.

Field notes: common surprises and how to handle them

Condensation that looks internal but isn't. Kitchen splashes and cleaning sprays can leave a hazy film that mimics internal misting. Before you panic, clean both sides of the pane with a mild, residue-free glass cleaner and a new microfiber cloth. Do not use vinegar or cream cleaners on low-E coatings. A true internal haze won't budge. A film will wipe clean and reveal a healthy unit.

Trickle vent myths. I often hear that trickle vents cause draughts and make windows colder. Closed, they don't. Open, they provide a controlled airflow that actually reduces roomside condensation on cold days. If you have double glazing that looks wet on the inside pane every morning but clears at midday, try running vents slightly open at night with the door ajar. You may find the "problem window" behaves again. This doesn't fix a blown unit, but it prevents misdiagnosis.

Security glass surprises. Bathrooms near doors, parts of conservatories, and low-level glazing often require toughened or laminated units by code. If the misted pane sits lower than 800 mm from the floor or near a door, expect the quote to specify safety glass. It costs more and has a longer lead time. It's not the fitter upselling, it's compliance and your safety.



Solar gain changes. When you replace old clear units with modern low-E, you might notice less harsh sun and slower heating in south rooms. Some homeowners love this because the rooms stay steady. Others miss the winter warmup. If you value passive heat, discuss glass options that balance U-value with solar gain. There are coatings that keep the heat in without blocking too much useful sun.

What competent Double Glazing Repairs look like

From the outside, this work can seem like just swapping a pane, but finesse matters. Compression blocks sit at the right points so the sash doesn't slump. Fixed-side packers keep the sightlines straight. The fitter labels which side carries the low-E coating and orients it correctly toward the cavity. They check for rattle after re-beading and test locking points. They seal only where appropriate, because over-sealing can trap water and defeat the frame's drainage design. Finally, they clean without scratching. I use fresh plastic wedges and soft mallets on beads because one split bead turns a tidy job into a hunt for a matching **Double Glazing Repairs** profile.



You should get a simple record: unit sizes, specification, any safety glass declarations, and a warranty. Many reputable companies back sealed units for 5 to 10 years. Ask how they deal with glass imperfections, like minor inclusions or roller wave, and what counts as acceptable under glass standards. A good firm will be upfront and resolve anything obvious.

Prevention habits that extend unit life

Double glazing isn't maintenance-free, just low maintenance. A few habits add years.

Keep weep holes clear and don't silicone over drains. I've seen perfect seals fail early because water had nowhere to go.

Avoid slamming sashes. That repeated shock jars the corner keys and stresses the seal. If your window slams, adjust the restrictor or have the hinges tuned.

Paint timber frames patiently. Mask seals and spacers, and never seal the overlap where the sash needs to shed water. Paint bridging can wick moisture to the wrong places.

Mind pressure washing. Keep the lance back and angle the spray away from glazing edges. I repair more seals after enthusiastic spring cleans than after storms.

Ventilate well. Kitchens and bathrooms create heavy humidity. Use extractors, even for a few minutes after the steam stops. Balanced humidity keeps inside surfaces dry, and a drier house treats its glazing kindly.

A quick reality check on energy savings

Marketers like big numbers. Real homes behave more modestly. Replacing one or two blown units won't halve your bill, but it will improve comfort precisely where you feel it, near the glass, and will prevent the stealthy losses that add up over a winter. If you replace a whole set of leaky, 20-year-old units with modern low-E, you can see heating demand fall by a noticeable margin, often in the 10 to 20 percent range for affected rooms. That's the range I've measured with smart thermostats and thermal cameras in lived-in homes. Your climate, window area, and habits all matter.

When the fog isn't the urgent issue

There are cases where a misted unit can wait. Spare rooms you barely heat, a small top-light that mists once a week, or a garage window can sit on the list for months without consequence. If your budget is tight, prioritize safety glass that's failed in bathrooms and near doors, then main living spaces and bedrooms. If an elderly occupant sits by a window, fix that one early. Comfort beats a perfectly clear view in the utility room.

On the other hand, fast-track any unit with visible water beads inside the cavity that run and gather. That means the desiccant is saturated and liquid water is present. Those units degrade quickly. Likewise, fix timber framed units that show black staining around the bead line. You're protecting the frame as much as the view.

Bringing it all together

Blown double glazing isn't a crisis, it's a signal. It tells you the sealed unit has reached the end of its effective life or suffered a stress that pushed it over the line. The earlier you listen to the small cues, the simpler and cheaper the remedy. Trained eyes look for light rainbow tide marks, tired edge seals, cold perimeter bands, and patchy condensation that doesn't wipe away. They separate normal room humidity from a genuine cavity failure.

When it's time, Misted Double Glazing Repairs focused on replacing the sealed unit inside your existing frame restore both clarity and insulation. The work is straightforward in competent hands and doesn't demand a full window swap unless your frames are also on the way out. You'll hear pitches for defogging and re-gassing. Use them only as stopgaps and with eyes open about performance trade-offs.

If you keep drains clear, ventilate sensibly, and avoid unnecessary stress on sashes, your windows will thank you with longer service. And when one finally goes milky, treat it like a worn tire. Replace it promptly, enjoy the smoother ride, and keep rolling.