Double glazed windows should be the quiet workhorses of a home. When they do their job, you barely notice them: no drafts, no traffic rumble, no winter chill creeping in around the frames. Then one morning you pull up the blind and see it, a stubborn bloom of mist trapped between the panes. You wipe, it stays. The view goes milky, the glass starts looking tired, and your energy bills creep up. That is the moment most people type Can you Fix Blown Double Glazing into a search bar. There is good news and nuance here. With a bit of science, some practical judgment, and a clear look at costs, you can choose the right path and avoid throwing money at the wrong fix.

What “blown” really means

In everyday speech, “blown double glazing” usually refers to a failed sealed unit. A typical double glazed unit, also called an insulated glass unit or IGU, has two panes of glass separated by a spacer bar, with a precise air gap that is either dry air or an inert gas such as argon or krypton. The edges are sealed with a moisture barrier and an adhesive sealant. Inside the spacer is a desiccant that absorbs residual moisture during manufacture and catches the tiny amount that diffuses into the cavity later in life.

When the edge seal fails, outside air can enter. That air carries moisture. The desiccant gets overwhelmed, can no longer keep the cavity dry, and condensation starts to form on the inner faces of the panes, usually visible first at the edges, then drifting inward on cold days. That persistent internal mist is the telltale sign of a “blown” unit. The glass itself is not broken, the pane surfaces are intact, but the sealed system has lost its integrity.

I have inspected hundreds of these failures, and the pattern repeats. South and west elevations tend to fail sooner because of thermal cycling. Units above cookers or in bathrooms get hotter and wetter. Aluminium spacers from older units expand differently to the glass and can stress the seal line. Timber frames can swell and twist, putting the edge under constant movement. None of this is dramatic in isolation, yet over years it adds up.

The physics behind the mist

Warm air holds more water vapour than cold air. When a warm room meets a cold night through a window, temperatures drop at the glass interface and water vapour condenses on the coldest surface. In a healthy IGU the coldest surface is the room side pane, and you sometimes see a light film there on frosty mornings that wipes away. In a blown unit, moisture condenses within the cavity because the dew point inside has risen past the temperature of the glass surface. That moisture cannot be wiped away, so you get that trapped fog.

Gas fill matters too. Argon improves thermal performance by roughly 10 to 15 percent over air in typical 20 to 16 millimetre cavities because it has lower thermal conductivity. When the seal fails, the argon diffuses out and gets replaced by ambient air. Thermal performance drops, and the window feels colder. Low-E coatings, which reflect long-wave heat back into the room, still help, but they are not magic if the cavity is wet and gas fill is gone.

Another piece of the puzzle is pressure. Sealed units are made at a specific altitude and temperature. If the pressure difference between manufacture and installation site is large, spacers include breather tubes or capillary tubes so the unit can equalise during transit, then those tubes are sealed on site. I have seen units where the tube was never pinched off, effectively leaving a tiny leak path forever. That error can take a year or two to show up, but it does.

Why some units fail early

Not all double glazing is created equal. I have replaced failed units that were barely three years old, and others still going strong after two decades. A few factors show up repeatedly:

- Edge seal quality, including the type of primary seal (polyisobutylene) and secondary seal (polysulphide, polyurethane, or silicone). Cheaper units often skimp on the secondary seal thickness or select a sealant that does not bond well to the spacer system used. Over time, micro-channels form and admit moisture.
- Spacer technology. Warm-edge spacers, often made of composite polymers or stainless steel, reduce thermal stress at the edge. Traditional aluminium spacers conduct heat well, making the edge of the glass colder and pushing condensate formation and seal fatigue.
- Frame drainage. uPVC and aluminium frames have drainage channels and weep holes. If those clog, water sits in the glazing rebate and attacks the edge seal. Timber frames need regular paint or oil, otherwise water finds the path of least resistance.
- Installation practice. Packers should sit at bearing points, not mid-span. Units should not be forced into out-of-square frames. I once saw bead clips used instead of proper wedge gasket on a windy coast site. The unit moved with every gust, grinding the seal at the corners until it gave up.
- Environment. Coastal homes face salt, which is corrosive to metal spacers and can degrade seals faster. Urban pollution adheres to frames and retains moisture. South-facing glass bakes in summer, then cools quickly at night, cycling the seal.

Make no mistake, you can have an A-rated unit, gas filled, low-E coated, set into a handsome frame, and if the installer nicks the primary seal with a glazing shovel, you have a time bomb.

Diagnosing a blown unit, step by step

Most homeowners start with the mist that will not wipe away. There are a few quick checks to confirm the diagnosis before you phone someone for Double Glazing Repairs.

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First, clean both sides of the glass with a dry microfiber cloth so you are not fooled by condensation on the room face. Then breathe lightly on the inside pane. If the mist pattern you see through the glass does not change, the condensation is in the cavity.

Second, check the edges. Look for a halo of moisture or spots that move slowly as the sun hits the window. If you see beads inside that run like rain, the desiccant is saturated and you have a fully compromised unit.

Third, run your fingers around the frame and across the glass. A blown unit often feels colder than its neighbours, especially along the bottom edge. I have measured a 2 to 3 degree Celsius difference on a winter morning between intact and failed units on the same wall.

Fourth, inspect the frame. Blocked weep holes, split gaskets, and missing glazing packers are common. A blown unit might be the headline, but perished rubbers and poor drainage are often the co-stars you need to address at the same time.

Finally, if you have access to a thermal camera, even a phone attachment, take a quick image at dusk. A blown pane often shows a cool patchwork at the edges and a different colour profile compared to adjacent windows. It is not a lab test, but it is a helpful indicator.

Can you fix blown double glazing without replacing the unit?

This is the big question. You will find companies advertising Misted Double Glazing Repairs that “drill and fill.” The method is straightforward. They drill a tiny hole through the outer pane, purge the cavity with dry air or alcohol, sometimes add an anti-fog solution, then plug the hole with a hydrophobic vent. The moisture disappears, the view clears, and the bill lands well below the cost of a new sealed unit.

I have used this method in specific situations and recommend it cautiously. Here is the trade-off. You are not restoring the original gas fill, nor the original hermetic seal. You are converting a failed sealed unit into a vented unit that can remain clear if the cavity is kept relatively dry. If the frame drains well and the window sits in a sheltered elevation, the result can last several years. In a damp bathroom or a coastal storm belt, the mist can return within a season.

The other consideration is warranty and compliance. Many glazing manufacturers provide 5 to 10 year warranties on sealed units. Drilling the glass voids any remaining coverage and can complicate future claims. Argon-filled,

low-E, soft-coat units rely on a stable cavity environment to achieve their rated U-values. A vented fix restores clarity but not energy performance.

So, can you Fix Blown Double Glazing? Yes, in the sense of restoring visibility and halting further internal *Misted Window Repairs* moisture with a vented repair. If your priority is thermal performance and longevity, replacing the sealed unit is the proper fix. Not the whole window, just the glass unit. Good installers can swap an IGU in under an hour for standard sizes, reusing the frame and beads.

When replacement is the smarter play

I tell clients to think in 3, 7, and 15 year horizons. If you plan to move within 3 years and just want the room to look sharp for viewings, a budget drill-and-vent repair can **Double Glazing Repairs** be sensible on a couple of panes, provided the frames are sound and the units are not in the wettest rooms. If you expect to stay at least 7 years, replacement sealed units almost always pay back in comfort, condensation control, and energy savings. At 15 years and beyond, you are into lifecycle planning. Replacing older units with modern low-E glass, warm-edge spacers, argon fill, and correct cavity width offers a noticeable step up. In a semi-detached home, I have seen heating costs drop by 8 to 12 percent after replacing a dozen tired units, even without touching the boiler.

You also need to look at the frame. If the frame is warped, rotten, or the gaskets have crumbled away, sliding a new unit into a poor environment shortens its life. On older timber windows, budget for frame repairs or glass-to-wood sealing along the glazing line to keep water away from the edge seal. With uPVC frames that have yellowed and shrunk gaskets, replacing the wedge and bubble gaskets during the same visit makes sense. Materials are inexpensive, labour is what it is, and you get a better seal overall.

Anatomy of a proper replacement

A good Double Glazing Repairs technician treats a blown unit as a symptom and checks the whole assembly. The sequence I follow looks like a calm, tidy ritual.

First, measure properly. Not just glass width and height, but the cavity thickness, the spacer colour and type, and whether the original was low-E soft coat on surface 3 or hard coat on surface 2. You want to maintain the visual line, especially on a mixed elevation where replacing one pane with a different tint stands out. If you can source the original supplier’s spec, even better.

Second, prep the site. Remove beads carefully with the right tools. Label them so they go back in the same order and orientation. Pull the unit, check the packers. Look for water stains in the rebate. Clear the drainage holes. If the frame is aluminium or uPVC, inspect the thermal break and internal chambers. On timber, probe for softness at the lower corners.

Third, clean the rebate and replace any perished gaskets. Fit new packers to support the unit at bearing points and keep it square, creating a small, even gap all around. Glass should not sit hard on the frame. That tiny perimeter gap makes room for differential movement and avoids point loads that can crack corners during thermal expansion.

Fourth, set the unit, confirm even sightlines and that the sash closes without binding. Reinstall beads in sequence, tapping them in evenly so they seat fully. Check for rattle or play. A good installer will also check the keeps and hinges while there, because a window that seals properly against its weatherstrips will not pump moisture toward the glass edge during storms.

Fifth, test the weep holes with a quick bottle of water. You want to see it run freely to the outside. That simple step saves headaches later.

The real cost and what influences it

Costs vary by region, unit size, and spec. As of recent work in the UK, a standard 600 by 900 millimetre replacement IGU, low-E, argon filled, warm-edge spacer, might land between £90 and £150 supply only. Add labour and callout, and you are into the £150 to £250 range per unit for straightforward access. Large picture windows, tricky bays, or laminated safety glass for critical locations push those numbers up. In North America, the equivalent might run $180 to $400 for typical sizes and specs, depending on market.

Drill-and-vent repairs tend to fall in the £60 to £120 per pane range for domestic work, often with discounts for multiple panes at the same address. Again, those figures are ballpark, not quotes. What people underestimate is the value of bundling. If you have five misted panes, do them at once, because travel, setup, and bead work create efficiencies. A reputable firm will pass some of that saving on.

Do not forget incidentals. New gaskets for a whole room’s worth of sashes might add £40 to £80 in materials. If you also want trickle vents fitted to improve ventilation in a condensation-prone bedroom, that adds a little more but pays off in less moisture loading through winter.

Preventing the next failure

Prevention is mostly about protecting the edge seal and controlling moisture. Keep frame drainage clear. Once a year, run a pipe cleaner or a small nylon brush through the weep holes. After storms, wipe standing water out of the rebates if you notice it.

Ventilate rooms that produce moisture. Cooking, showers, and drying clothes indoors load the air with vapour. An extractor fan that actually vents to the outside, not into a loft, makes a bigger difference than most upgrades you can buy for the glass itself. If you have a modern heat recovery ventilator, ensure it is balanced correctly. Subtle imbalances can draw cold air through small gaps and stress seals.

If you are replacing units, specify warm-edge spacers. They add marginal cost and reduce stress at the perimeter. Match the cavity thickness to the glass spec. Most low-E argon units perform best around 16 millimetres total cavity for double glazing, although manufacturers will provide exact data for their coatings. Oversized cavities can encourage convection loops inside the gap, which reduce performance.

Pay attention to installation. On the day, watch for care with packers and beads. Ask to see that weep holes are unclogged after the swap. Good installers are happy to walk you through it. If someone wants to silicone a sealed unit directly to a frame without a barrier or packers, pause the job and ask why. Glue is not a substitute for a proper mechanical fit.

Special cases and edge scenarios

Not every misted pane is a standard unit waiting for a standard fix. I come across a few recurring edge cases:

Historic frames with slim rebates. Older sash windows sometimes have narrow pockets that limit unit thickness. You might be looking at 4-4-4 with a 6 millimetre spacer, which is not ideal thermally. In such cases, the best route may be vacuum insulated glass or a secondary glazing system rather than forcing a modern IGU into a fragile frame. Vacuum units cost more but can transform comfort in drafty homes without altering sightlines.

Safety glass zones. Near doors, at low levels, or in bathrooms, regulations often require toughened or laminated glass. Toughened is more common and affordable, but laminated offers better acoustic performance and security. When replacing blown units in these zones, keep the safety spec. It is not just a code box to tick, it is about how the glass behaves if it breaks.

Noise mitigation. If traffic noise is part of your goal, consider acoustic laminated panes or, better yet, an asymmetric build like 6.4 acoustic laminate outside and 4 on the inside with a 16 millimetre argon gap. The mismatch in thickness discourages resonance at specific frequencies. Simply replacing with like-for-like might clear the mist but miss an opportunity to improve quiet.

Triple glazing retrofits. Some clients ask to upgrade to triple glazing during blown unit replacement. In uPVC or aluminium frames with sufficient depth and robust hinges, it can work. On older sashes and many timber casements, the added weight and thickness cause problems. Hinges sag, sashes bow, and that leads to more drafts and shorter hardware life. A quality double glazed low-E unit often hits the sweet spot of weight, performance, and cost in existing frames.

A homeowner’s short, practical decision guide

The choices feel less daunting when reduced to a few decisive checks.

- If the mist is between panes and does not wipe away, the sealed unit has failed. Clear the frame drains, then decide on repair versus replacement based on budget and horizon.
- If energy performance and longevity matter, replace the sealed unit like-for-like or better. Keep frames if they are sound.
- If budget is tight and the room is not high humidity, a drill-and-vent misted unit repair can buy time. Accept reduced thermal performance.
- If multiple units have failed, bundle the work with a reputable Double Glazing Repairs firm, and upgrade to warm-edge spacers and fresh gaskets.
- If the frame is compromised, fix the frame first. A perfect unit in a poor frame fails early.

What a trustworthy contractor looks like

I have met brilliant tradespeople and a few chancers. A trustworthy outfit does a survey before quoting, measures carefully, explains the spec without jargon, and offers options rather than a single take-it-or-leave-it price. They do not push a whole window replacement if the frame is solid and the seals can be renewed. They will talk openly about Misted Double Glazing Repairs as a stopgap and about full unit replacement as the durable fix. On the day, they protect floors, handle glass with suction cups, label beads, and test weep holes. If a bead cracks, they replace it rather than bodging it with caulk. When asked for a written guarantee, they provide a clear one, typically 5 years on the sealed unit.

If you are in a listed building or conservation area, they should know the local rules, and if they do not, they will say so. I would rather hear “let me check” than watch someone bluff their way into an enforcement headache.

A note on condensation that is not failure

Every winter, I get calls from people worried about misted windows that are not blown. Exterior condensation on the outside pane of a high-performance low-E unit in the early morning is a good sign. The outer pane is cold enough to condense dew because the unit is doing its job keeping heat in. It usually burns off by mid-morning. Interior condensation on the room side that wipes away is a ventilation problem, not a glass failure. Dehumidify, use extractor fans, reduce indoor clothes drying, and consider trickle vents. Save replacement for actual failed seals.

The bottom line, drawn from the field

Blown double glazing is not a catastrophe, it is a maintenance event. The science tells you why it happens: seal failure, moisture ingress, dew point dynamics, and thermal cycling. The fix depends on your priorities. If you want the view back and can live with a modest hit to efficiency for a few years, a vented Misted Double Glazing Repairs service can work. If you expect comfort, clarity, and lower bills for the next decade, replace the sealed unit and tidy up the frame while you are there. Most of the value lies in the details: warm-edge spacers, correct cavity, fresh gaskets, dry rebates, and the patient craft of setting glass square and free to move.

I still remember a coastal bungalow where the sea air had chewed through a dozen units within six years. We replaced every sealed unit with stainless warm-edge spacers, specified laminated exteriors for a touch more resilience, and cleaned and enlarged the weep holes. Ten winters later, the panes are clear and the frames are dry. No magic, just respect for the physics and care in the installation. If you can bring that mindset to your own windows, the fog will lift and stay away.