

If your view has turned into a hazy watercolor and your windows drip with condensation between the panes, you are looking at a common problem: misted double glazing. I have met countless homeowners who wipe the inside glass for months before realizing the moisture is sealed inside the unit, not on the room side. The fix is not always a full window replacement, and the right approach can save hundreds of pounds and a lot of disruption. Let's unpack what's happening, how to diagnose it properly, and when to reach for a repair versus a replacement.

Why double glazing mists in the first place

A double glazed unit is more than two panes of glass. Between those panes sits a spacer bar filled with desiccant, and the perimeter is sealed with a primary sealant around the spacer and a secondary sealant around the edges. Manufacturers often fill the cavity with argon or krypton to improve insulation. When everything is sound, the unit is airtight and dry. The inner surfaces of the glass stay free of moisture because the dry cavity cannot support condensation.

Misting is a symptom of a failed seal, and sometimes a failed spacer. Once that edge seal breaks down, even slightly, water vapor from the ambient air diffuses into the cavity. The desiccant can mop up only so much before it saturates. After that, changes in temperature drive moisture onto the cold inner surfaces of the glass. You see fog, then beads, then streaks of mineral deposits where the condensate dries.

Age is a factor, but not the only one. Ultraviolet light degrades sealants over time. Frames that flex with seasonal movement can stress the seals. Poor drainage in uPVC frames lets water sit against the edge of the unit, accelerating failure. On the install side, inadequate edge cover by glazing beads, insufficient packers, or rough handling can shorten a unit's life. I regularly see units fail around 10 to 15 years, but I also service five-year-old windows that were let down by installation shortcuts.

Distinguishing misting from ordinary condensation

I always start by making sure the problem is in the unit, not in the room. If moisture wipes clean from the inner side of the inner pane, that is normal interior condensation driven by humidity in the home. Kitchens and bathrooms often cloud up on cold mornings because warm, moist indoor air meets a cold surface. The fix there is ventilation and better heat balance, not glass replacement.

Two telltale signs confirm a failed unit. First, you cannot reach the moisture with a cloth because it sits within the cavity. Second, you might spot dust-like specks or white tide marks where water has dried on the inside face. I also check for drafts around the frame, but a failed unit can be perfectly draught free. The failure is between the panes, not necessarily between the frame and sash.

Can you fix blown double glazing?

This is a question I hear weekly: Can you fix blown double glazing, or do you have to replace the whole window? The answer is nuanced.

You cannot re-pressurize or re-gas a sealed unit once the edge seal has failed. The gas fill and the vacuum-like dryness are established at the factory, not in situ. However, you often do not need to replace the entire window frame or sash. In most modern systems, the glass unit is a replaceable component. You can:

- Replace the insulated glass unit (IGU) only, reusing the existing frame and hardware.

When budgets are tight or when the frame is in good condition, this approach gives you a “like new” thermal performance for far less than a full frame swap. I keep replacement to the unit wherever possible unless the frame itself is compromised.

There is a second category often marketed as Misted Double Glazing Repairs: drain and vent or de-misting services. These involve drilling tiny holes through one pane, flushing desiccant-laden air into the cavity, then fitting one-way micro vents.

Some customers like this because it is cheaper up front. In my experience, it is a stopgap. It can clear visible fog and improve appearance for a time, but it turns your IGU into a vented system. You lose the original argon fill and the sealed environment, so U-values typically degrade. On windy, wet days, these units are prone to re-fog or to show dirt lines, and you might hear a slight whistle if vents are poorly placed. I recommend this only when a property is a short-term hold or when the unit is in an awkward shape or size that is hard to source quickly.

How I evaluate a misted unit on site

The first step is an inspection that takes in the whole assembly. I look at:

- The frame condition: uPVC, timber, or aluminum all have distinct failure patterns.
- Drainage paths: on uPVC, the weep holes and channels sometimes clog with debris, causing standing water that shortens seal life.
- Glazing beads and gaskets: hard, shrunk, or missing gaskets can point to aging across the whole elevation.
- Solar exposure: south and west facing units wear faster, which can guide budgeting for future replacements.
- Spacer type: warm edge spacers perform better and last longer than older aluminum spacers that conduct heat and cool the edge of the glass.

I also measure accurately. Double glazed units often have a thickness around 20 to 28 mm in residential uPVC, with 4 mm glass panes separated by a 12 to 20 mm cavity. That said, I have pulled IGUs ranging from 14 mm slimline units in older timber sashes to 40 mm triple glazing in newer builds. The new unit must match the rebate and glazing bead profiles. While I am at it, I confirm safety glass where required. Toughened or laminated glass is mandatory near doors, low sills, and in bath or shower areas under building regulations.

What you can try before calling a specialist

If the fog is inside the cavity, DIY fixes are limited. Still, a couple of checks can protect your investment and sometimes postpone failure in other units:

- Clear all external and internal drainage channels in uPVC frames. If water cannot escape, it sits against the glass edge and finds its way into the smallest weakness.
- Replace brittle wedge gaskets and check for gaps at the corners. While this will not repair a blown unit, it can prevent drafts and water tracking that makes matters worse.
- Address indoor humidity. Consistent indoor RH between 40 and 55 percent helps reduce stress on the window system as a whole. Use lids on boiling pots, run the extractor during and after showers, and avoid drying laundry on radiators without ventilation.

For the misted unit itself, the practical choice is either a new IGU or a vented de-misting service. If you are inclined to try de-misting, ask for data on the expected U-value change and a written lifespan estimate. Many providers quote 1 to 3 years for clear appearance. In colder climates, it can be shorter.



The replacement process, step by step

A proper replacement of the IGU is straightforward but benefits from practiced hands. The goal is to avoid damaging beads, frames, or plaster reveals, and to re-pack the sash so the unit sits square and distributes its weight to the hinges.

The process goes like this. The glazing beads are carefully pried off, usually starting with the longest side. With timber, a sharp utility blade breaks paint lines. Packers around the unit are noted before removal, because their positions matter. The misted unit is lifted out. The frame is cleaned, drainage checked, and any debris removed. New packers go in, and we set the new unit, ensuring [double glazed unit replacement](#) the sightlines are even. Beads snap back, and any gaskets are reseated. On tall or heavy sashes, hinge adjustment may be needed to correct drop over time. The whole thing takes 30 to 90 minutes per window, depending on size and access, plus a bit of tidying.

If safety glass is required, order times may run longer than standard float glass. Specialty coatings, like low-E glass, can also affect lead time. Many suppliers hold common sizes and specs on short turnaround, often 3 to 10 working days. Bespoke shapes and integral blinds can be several weeks.

Cost and value: where the money goes

For a typical residential uPVC casement in a standard size, replacing the IGU only often lands in the range of £120 to £250 per window in many UK areas, including supply and fit, though prices vary by region and glass spec. Larger panes, toughened or laminated safety glass, and special coatings push that up. Aluminum and timber frames can require more careful handling, which adds labor time.

Full frame replacement is a different scale of cost, often 5 to 10 times the price of a single IGU swap, because it involves ripping out frames, making good reveals, and sometimes scaffolding. If frames are sound, going with an IGU keeps disruption low. Energy savings from a like-for-like new IGU can be modest on a single window, but the comfort gain is real. When a property has a batch of units all installed at the same time and in the same exposure, I recommend a phased replacement strategy: tackle the worst offenders first, then spread the rest over a year or two. The small efficiencies in grouping work by elevation often shave labor costs.

When a repair is not the right call

I decline repairs in a few scenarios. If the frame is warped or rotten, or the sash has sagged beyond what hinge adjustment can correct, a new sealed unit will not seat or seal properly. Timber with deep rot around glazing rebates needs remedial carpentry first. In listed buildings with historic glazing bars and slim sightlines, replacement often demands bespoke slimline units or restoration glass to keep the aesthetic. That needs a specialist and usually planning consent.

If a home is chronically humid due to ventilation issues, I sometimes advise fixing the root cause before investing in new glass. Persistent RH above 60 percent will still generate window condensation on the room face during cold snaps, leading homeowners to think the new units have failed. They have not; the environment is simply too moist for the temperature.

The de-misting method: what it does and does not do

Let's talk frankly about de-misting services. They drill a couple of small holes in the outer pane, inject air or a drying agent, sometimes rinse the cavity, and install micro vents. Done neatly, it can clear the appearance in a day. It also lowers the insulation value because the unit is now ventilated and has lost any gas fill.

I have revisited homes two winters later where these vents were still doing an acceptable job. I have also seen others re-fog within months after a wet storm season. Factors include the angle of exposure, prevailing winds, and how well the holes were placed and sealed. If you go this route, ask for photographs of the holes and neat caps, and confirm whether any warranty is offered. Expect a lower warranty term than a new IGU would carry.

For landlords managing turnover or sellers preparing for a survey, a de-misting service can be a pragmatic, short-term way to restore clarity. For owner-occupied homes where comfort and efficiency matter, I steer toward a fresh IGU.



Upgrades worth considering while you are at it

If you are replacing the IGU, you have a chance to improve performance over the original. Low-E coatings reduce heat loss in winter and solar gain in summer. Argon-filled cavities are standard in many quality units. Warm edge [Double Glazing Repairs](#) spacers cut down on the cold bridge at the perimeter, reducing the risk of edge condensation and improving U-values. In noise-prone areas, acoustic laminated glass can make a noticeable difference without making the window look heavier.

Pick your upgrade in proportion to the frame's capacity and the property's needs. A high-spec triple glazed unit in an older, slender uPVC or timber frame may be too heavy, stressing hinges and compromising longevity. I often specify 4-20-4 low-E argon with a warm edge spacer as a solid, balanced choice in many typical homes. For older timber sashes with narrow rebates, slim double glazing around 14 mm overall thickness can preserve sightlines while improving comfort, but you must accept a smaller thermal gain than with deeper units.

Caring for new and old units

Good maintenance extends the life of your glazing. Keep weep holes clear. Wash frames and glass periodically, but avoid solvent cleaners that attack seals. For uPVC, a mild detergent and a soft cloth do the job. Wedge gaskets dry out over time, especially on the sun side; replacing them is a simple, inexpensive refresh. Hinges and mechanisms like espagnolette locks appreciate a drop of light oil once a year.

Indoors, manage humidity sources. A small digital hygrometer costs little and tells you when RH creeps above 60 percent. Use trickle vents if fitted, and do not block them with curtains or blinds. In cold weather, keep blinds slightly off the glass to allow airflow, otherwise the pane behind can drop below dew point and sweat.

Anecdotes from the field: what goes wrong and how to avoid it

A couple of patterns repeat. One, I see uPVC sashes that have been retrofitted with very heavy glass without re-packing or hinge upgrades. Within months, the sash drops and drags on the frame. It is not a glass fault; it is a geometry and weight distribution problem. Proper packers at the hinge and lock sides, ***Double Glazing Repairs Oakham*** and the correct hinge spec, keep the sash square.

Two, timber beads that were silicone-sealed to the glass rather than to the frame become water traps. Moisture capillaries under the bead, the unit edge sits wet, and the seal fails early. The bead-seal geometry matters. You

want a clean drainage path and bedding sealant where the frame supports the unit, not a dam where water can sit.

Three, overly enthusiastic pressure washers. A jet aimed at glazing beads and gaskets lifts them, forcing water into places it should not go. Wash the windows, not the seals, with a gentle spray and a brush attachment.

Realistic expectations and warranties

A new IGU from a reputable fabricator typically carries a 5 to 10 year warranty. That covers the sealed unit against internal condensation. It does not cover scratches from cleaning, breakage from impact, or frame movement that crushes the unit. Keep paperwork, including the exact specification of the unit and the date of installation. If a unit fails prematurely, that documentation speeds up replacements.

A full window system from a single brand sometimes comes with longer guarantees, but those are tied to using their frames, beads, and glass as a package. When you are replacing just the IGU, aim for a named supplier and a written warranty from the installer. Cheap units without documentation are a false economy.

A simple decision guide

Most homeowners want to know the shortest path to a clear, efficient window. Here is how I frame it in conversation.



If the unit is misted and the frame is solid, replace the IGU. It restores thermal performance and clarity with minimal disruption. If budget is tight and the property is a short-term hold, consider a de-misting service with eyes open about the trade-offs. If frames are failing, rotten, or the sash geometry is compromised, plan for full frame replacement. If numerous units are the same age and exposure, phase the work in bundles to save on callouts and to keep the home comfortable year-round.

Safety glass and compliance: do not skip this

Regulations exist for a reason. In critical locations like doors, side panels near doors, low-level glazing within a defined height from the floor, and bathrooms, safety glass is not optional. I still encounter homes where ordinary float glass was fitted in a wet room or down to the floor in a child's bedroom. Replacing a misted unit in these zones is the moment to upgrade to toughened or laminated glass. Laminated has the bonus of improved security

and sound reduction. Your installer should measure the critical zones and advise, but do not rely on guesswork. A quick check against the latest guidance ensures peace of mind.

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Weather, orientation, and realistic lifespan

Not every elevation ages the same. South and west facades absorb more UV and heat cycles. Coastal homes see salt and wind pressure. Urban grime collects on sills and beads. I set expectations accordingly: a quality IGU on a sheltered north elevation can go beyond 15 years; on a sun-baked west wall it may need replacement around the 10 to 12 year mark. Warm edge spacers and good gaskets stretch that life. A well-maintained frame stretches it further.

The takeaway for homeowners

Double Glazing Repairs need not be dramatic or expensive. A misted unit signals a failed seal, not a failed window. Most of the time, the clean fix is a new IGU matched to your frame, installed with proper packing and attention to drainage. Misted Double Glazing Repairs based on drilling and venting can buy time, but treat them as cosmetic and temporary. If you are asking yourself, Can you fix blown double glazing without replacing the entire window, the practical answer is yes: replace the glass unit, not the frame, and use the opportunity to upgrade the spec in a way that suits your home.

A clear view, a warmer room, and a quiet close to the sash are the small daily rewards of getting this right. I have watched many clients regret years of wiping and wishing once they finally swap in a new unit and the fog lifts for good.