

Double glazed windows are a quiet workhorse. They insulate, hush traffic noise, and keep homes drier and more comfortable. When they go wrong, you feel it in the draft by your elbow, the fog in the morning, and the bump in your heating bill. Repairing them is part science, part craft. Over the years I have replaced misted units by head torch in winter, teased out stubborn beading without cracking a thing, and rebuilt sashes that had been painted shut for a decade. This guide walks through how professionals approach Double Glazing Repairs, the tools we rely on, and when to repair versus replace.

What double glazing is really doing

A double glazed unit, or IGU for insulated glass unit, is two panes of glass separated by a spacer bar. The cavity is filled with air or a noble gas like argon, then sealed. That void slows heat transfer, while the low emissivity coating on one pane bounces radiant heat back to where it came from. The edge seal keeps moisture out and gas in. Most failures trace back to that edge seal or to how the unit was installed in its frame.

At a glance, a healthy unit looks anonymous. The moment the seal fails, it tells on itself. You see condensation between the panes, cloudy streaks that won't wipe off, or a milky band around the perimeter. Hardware and frame problems announce themselves differently: stiff handles, a sash that hits the frame, a whistling draft on a windy night.



The fault-finding mindset

Before reaching for a pry tool, a pro inspects and tests. Diagnosis saves money because it stops you replacing a whole unit when the hinge is the offender.



Visual clues matter. I look for mineral trails inside the cavity, hairline cracks at corners, blown silicone on external beads, and bowed sashes. I feel for drafts with the back of my hand and a strip of tissue. I check frame squareness with a tape and a quick corner-to-corner measure. If a unit is heavy to open, that points at hinges and packers more than the glass.

On uPVC, blocked drainage slots cause internal water and can be mistaken for a blown unit. On timber, failed paint and perished putty let rain soak the beads, which then overwhelms the sealant. On aluminum, thermal break issues are rare, but cold bridging can create intermittent condensation that mimics seal failure.

The core tool kit that earns its keep

Some tools are nice to have. Others are non-negotiable. The goal is to disturb as little as possible and restore the performance the window had when new. These are the tools that come out most days.

- Glazing shovel and nylon packers. The shovel gives you controlled leverage to adjust the glass position without nicking the edge. Packers in various thicknesses support the glass and stop the sash twisting. Experienced fitters treat packers like shims in carpentry: tiny changes correct big misalignments.
- De-glazing tools and beading lifters. A stiff putty knife, a specialist beading tool, and a set of thin pry bars let you coax beads out without cracking them. Some frames require a particular sequence, top first then sides, to avoid stress on the glass.
- Suction cups. Even small IGUs surprise you with their weight. A pair of good suction handles, rated safely, keeps your fingers away from edges and gives precise control when lifting units in or out.
- Sealant guns and finishing tools. Neat silicone work looks good, but more importantly it bonds and sheds water correctly. I carry neutral cure silicone for sensitive finishes, low-modulus for movement joints, and glazing-grade for beads, plus a bottle of soapy water and a profiling tool to get a clean, consistent seal.

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- Multi-meter and infrared thermometer. On service calls about cold spots or suspected gas loss, a quick surface temperature scan can confirm thermal drop across the pane. A big delta suggests the unit still insulates; a small one hints the cavity has equalized with room air.

That list barely scratches the van. You will also see torx keys and Allen drivers for hinge adjustments, a track brush for patio rollers, a moisture meter for timber, oscillating multi-tool for stuck beads, and a head torch for the days you lose the light halfway through.

Can you Fix Blown Double Glazing?

Short answer, yes, but there are caveats. "Blown" is the trade shorthand for a failed perimeter seal. When the seal fails, moist air enters the cavity. As temperatures swing, that moisture condenses on the inner faces, giving you misted or milky glass. The only reliable cure that restores the unit's insulating performance is to replace the sealed glass unit. You can reseal the frame to keep rain out, but you cannot rebuild the factory seal on the glass edge in situ.

There is a niche service that drills tiny holes in the outer pane, flushes the [Cat Flap Installation](#) cavity, and inserts a desiccant valve. It can clear the misted look and buys time. I have used this on heritage units where glass replacement was constrained or where budgets were tight. The trade-off is performance. You effectively convert the unit into a vented cavity, so you lose the gas fill and some insulating value. For homes chasing lower bills and comfort, a new IGU is the better option.

If the misting appears only on cold mornings and disappears entirely on sunny days, test for drainage problems first. Clear weep holes and reset external sealant. If the fogging remains between the panes regardless of weather, you are looking at a failed unit.

How pros handle Misted Double Glazing Repairs

A typical repair on a uPVC casement goes like this. First, we identify the glazing system: internal or external beading, gasketed or taped. On internal bead systems, security is better and the swap is straightforward. We remove the beads in sequence, prying just enough to release the clips. Beads get labeled so they go back exactly where they came from, since lengths vary by a few millimeters and a mix-up shows.

With beads off, we mark existing packer positions. Glass needs to sit on load-bearing packers at the hinge side in opening sashes, not float on random shims. Poor packer placement is the silent cause of many failed handles and sagging sashes. Using suction cups, we lift the misted unit out and check the frame for debris, old tape, and moisture stains that signal a leaking corner.

The replacement IGU should match dimensions to within 2 mm and the spacer thickness to maintain the sash geometry. If the property faces busy roads or has temperature extremes, we often specify low-e coated, argon-filled units with warm-edge spacers. Those spacers, typically composite instead of aluminum, cut down on cold bridging at the perimeter. Once the new unit is in, we insert the packers to plumb and square the sash, then tap beads back in by hand with a rubber mallet, top and bottom first so the glass doesn't creep.

One tip: check operation before you finish, not after. Open and close the sash, watch the reveal gaps, and adjust hinges where necessary. On friction stay hinges, most have small set screws that change the stack height and pressure. A quarter turn can quiet a draft that would otherwise send you back next week.

For timber frames, the dance is similar but slower. Old putty gets cut away, pins withdrawn, and beads removed gently because splintered beads are a pain to remake. We treat bare timber with a sealing primer, then bed the IGU in glazing tape or a butyl bead, not ordinary silicone that can attack certain edge seals. External faces get a cap bead that sheds water away from the timber. Paint should bridge slightly onto the edge of the glass to protect the sealant from UV without gluing the unit in place.

When it is not the glass

A surprising number of “blown unit” calls turn into hardware days. If the sash has dropped, you will see a tight spot on the lock side. The handle feels notchy or needs a lift to throw the shoot bolts. Here the glass is innocent. The hinge screws may have loosened, or the packers were never set on the hinge side, letting the sash sag over time.

Multi-point locks can go out of alignment as the frame moves with seasons. On uPVC, the fix may be a few turns on adjustable cams. On timber, we sometimes ease the keepers slightly and refit, especially in cottages where nothing is square. You restore smooth travel of the bolts without leaving a big air gap.

Sliding doors offer a different set of failures. Grit destroys rollers. If the door takes two hands and a grunt to move, clean the track, vacuum out the grit, and check the rollers for flat spots. Adjust or replace them before you blame the glass. An infrared scan can confirm the door is still insulating well, which is often the case.

Safety practices worth the few extra minutes

Glass looks benign until it doesn't. Laminated panes behave differently if cracked, and toughened glass can still bite you with sharp edges. I teach apprentices to assume nothing. Protect the area. Put down dust sheets to catch clips and screws. Wear cut-resistant gloves, not cotton. Do not lean units against a flimsy dining chair. Either use a padded A-frame or stand them on timber blocks at a shallow angle.

When glazing above the ground floor, suction cups are non-negotiable and so is a second pair of hands. Removing external beads on upper floors can turn into a juggling act if wind picks up. If scaffolding is not feasible, you can sometimes remove sashes and work at ground level, which is safer and often faster.

Choosing replacement glass and spacers

People often ask if it is worth upgrading when a unit fails. If your home has older 12 mm cavities with clear float glass, a move to a 16 mm cavity with low-e and argon makes a noticeable difference. Expect a few degrees warmer surface temperature on cold days and less condensation. Warm-edge spacers reduce the cold line around the edge that attracts condensation.

Acoustic concerns point you toward asymmetric glazing. For example, a 6.4 laminated outer and a 4 inner pane with a decent cavity dampens traffic noise better than two equal panes. The cost jump over standard units is modest compared to the whole window, and the benefit on busy streets is real.

In bathrooms and near doors, check safety glazing rules. Toughened or laminated glass may be required depending on the distance to floor level and doorways. Pros carry the standards in their head because inspectors and, more importantly, accidents don't care that a unit looks fine.

Weatherproofing is not just silicone

Good glazing sheds water by design. The beads, gaskets, and drain slots form a path for water to get out faster than it gets in. After a repair, I always test with a gentle hose, aimed above the frame to mimic rain, not a pressure washer that drives water where it should never go. Watch the weep holes. Water should appear quickly and cleanly.

External silicone is your belt, not your trousers. It closes joints that might otherwise admit wind-driven rain, but it cannot compensate for blocked drainage or failed gaskets. If the original beads are brittle, replacing them and the compressible gaskets pays off more than another tube of silicone. On timber, a neat, slightly proud cap bead is better than a sunken bead that traps water.

Why some seals fail early

A well-made IGU should last 15 to 25 years. I see units fail early for a few reasons. Poor handling during install leaves micro chips on edges that later propagate into cracks. Sun-exposed elevations cook the sealant day after day, and if the spacer is aluminum without a thermal break, the perimeter runs cold, promoting condensation and stressing the seal. Aggressive solvents used to clean the frame can attack seals if the wrong product is used.

Bad packing is the silent killer. Glass must sit on solid supports. If it is hung off the lock side or allowed to flex when the window closes, the stress cycles the edge seal until it gives up. When I see three random packers floating in a sea of silicone, I know why the unit failed.

Budgeting and timing

Homeowners like numbers, and rightly so. The cost [Misted Window Repairs](#) of replacing a standard casement IGU in uPVC, supplied and fitted, typically sits in the range of modest three figures per window, depending on size, glass spec, and access. Oversized patio units or shaped panes climb from there. Drilling and venting a misted unit to clear its appearance costs less, but remember the performance trade-off. Hardware-only fixes are usually cheaper, often resolved within the call-out fee plus parts.

Lead times for new units vary by region and workload. Straightforward rectangles in common sizes can be turned in a few days by a good glass shop. Special laminates, toughened patterns, or shaped panes can take a week or two. If a home is exposed and you have a broken pane, temporary glazing with polycarbonate or securing film keeps weather out while the unit is made.

DIY or call a pro?

Confidence and context matter. If you are comfortable with trim work, can lift safely, and have an internal bead uPVC window, swapping an IGU is within reach with care. Be prepared for stubborn clips and the occasional surprise like a snapped bead. On timber, patience and proper bedding materials are essential. Old putty and glass edges are unforgiving.

I encourage DIY on visible, ground-floor windows with internal beads and straightforward access. I discourage it for: upper floors without safe platforms, external bead systems on busy streets, large panes heavier than 25 to 30 kg per person, and any situation where safety glazing rules are unclear. Missteps cost more than calling a glazier once.

A few field stories and what they teach

One winter, a bay window in a 1920s semi kept fogging after every storm. The owner had had two IGUs replaced in as many years. The instinct was “bad glass.” The rot sat deeper. The head of the bay had a hairline crack in the lead flashing. Water tracked down, soaked the timber beads, and overwhelmed the cap beads. We replaced the worst unit, but more importantly, we dried the frame, sealed the flashing, and rebuilt the beads in hardwood with a proper drip. That bay has stayed dry since. The lesson: fix the building, not just the window.

Another job involved a sliding patio door that had “blown.” The glass looked cloudy in bands, but the IR thermometer showed a healthy temperature drop across the pane. On closer inspection, a film of mineral residue sat on the outer surface, deposited by a misaligned sprinkler hitting the glass every morning. A careful clean with the right pad and product restored clarity. No glass replaced. The lesson: look twice, spend once.

Maintenance that avoids most repairs

Windows don’t need constant attention, but a little goes a long way. Wash frames and glass with mild soapy water, not solvents. Keep drain slots clear of spider webs and grit. Once a year, wipe a silicone-safe lubricant along uPVC gaskets to keep them supple. On timber, maintain paint, especially on top beads and sills where water sits. If handles get stiff, a drop of light oil on the spindle and moving parts restores feel.

Check reveals for even gaps. If a gap closes on the hinge side, plan a hinge adjustment before winter sets in. On windy days, run a tissue around the frame and feel for movement. A faint rustle now can be a whistle later.

The bottom line for Double Glazing Repairs

A good repair restores performance, not just appearance. For misted units, that usually means a new IGU sized and packed correctly. For stiff or drafty windows, a careful tune of hinges, keeps, and seals brings them back to quiet service. Can you Fix Blown Double Glazing? Yes, either by replacement of the failed unit or by a temporary venting method if circumstances demand, with clear trade-offs. Misted Double Glazing Repairs are best seen as an opportunity to upgrade to better spacers or coatings if your home would benefit. The right tools, the right steps, and a little patience make the difference between a quick fix and a lasting repair.

If you are weighing your options, start with a clear diagnosis. Take note of where the problem shows, when it appears, and what the window is doing mechanically. A brief call with a glazier who asks practical questions about beading, frame material, and symptoms can save you time and money. And when the unit clicks back into place, beads snug, handle smooth, and the room falls quiet, you feel why the craft matters.