

If you wake up to a milky haze between the panes of your window, you're not imagining things. That's a "blown" double glazed unit, and it means the seal that keeps the two panes airtight has failed. The view looks foggy, the glass can drip with condensation you can't wipe away, and the room often feels cooler or slightly damp. It's a common problem in homes with uPVC, aluminium, or timber frames, especially once windows pass the eight to fifteen year mark.

I've been around more misted units than I can count, from modest semis to coastal flats where salt-laden air works like sandpaper on seals. Homeowners ask the same question: can you fix blown double glazing yourself, or is it a job for a professional? The honest answer is, it depends—on the age and type of the window, your tools and patience, and what you call a "fix." Let's walk through the trade-offs, the practicalities, and where DIY makes sense.

What "blown" really means

Double glazed windows are sealed units, sometimes called IGUs or DGUs. Two panes of glass sit with a spacer around the edge, forming a cavity. That cavity is factory sealed and either vacuum dried or filled with an inert gas such as argon. The spacer also contains desiccant beads to absorb residual moisture. When the perimeter seal fails, ambient air sneaks in. Moisture then condenses on the cooler pane inside the cavity since there's no longer a controlled environment.

A blown unit isn't dangerous in itself, but performance falls off. Thermal insulation drops because the gas, if there was any, has escaped. You can feel more draughts, even if they're not directly through the glass. In winter, the inner pane runs colder, which can encourage interior condensation on the frame and sills.

Manufacturers guarantee sealed units for varying periods—often five to ten years for the glass unit, and sometimes longer from higher-end brands. If your window is still under warranty, call the installer before touching anything. If not, read on.

How to tell if your unit is blown, not just damp

I've seen people mistake a steamed-up inside surface for a failed unit, when the problem is actually indoor humidity. Here's the tell-tale sign: if the condensation sits between the panes, and you cannot touch it with your finger on either side, the unit is blown. If the water beads on the room-facing glass and you can wipe it away, the seal might still be sound. Poor ventilation, damp clothes drying, and even a new plaster job can saturate a home with moisture. Before ordering a replacement, run a simple test: dry the room thoroughly for a few days, use a dehumidifier or crack windows for 10 minutes twice daily, and see if the problem disappears. If the fog remains trapped inside the glass, you're in blown territory.

What actually fails, and why

Seals break for a handful of reasons. Age is the main culprit—UV light, thermal expansion and contraction, and movement in the frame slowly degrade perimeter seals. On aluminium and uPVC frames, especially dark colors that absorb heat, daily temperature swings can be punishing. In timber frames, moisture and paint buildup can trap water and encourage rot or swelling that stresses the sealed unit. Coastal homes see faster failure thanks to salt and wind. Pressure washers aimed at window edges or bead lines also cut seal life, as do harsh solvents used to clean frames. Even a neat planting of ivy or jasmine can trap moisture against beads and seals.

When I look at a “misted double glazing repairs” job, I check the beads, drainage slots, and frame alignment. A settling building can twist a sash slightly out of square, putting extra strain on the unit. Get the basics right and new units last longer.

What counts as a “repair” versus a replacement

The phrase Double Glazing Repairs covers a range of interventions, from simple hinge replacements to installing whole new sealed units. For blown glass specifically, you have three general routes:

- Swap the sealed unit. You keep the existing frame and sashes, but replace the glass cassette with a new factory-sealed IGU. This addresses the cause and restores performance.
- Drill and vent. Some firms drill pinholes through the spacer or glass, flush the cavity, and insert tiny vents and desiccant. The mist clears, but the unit is no longer sealed, so thermal performance won’t match a true replacement. It can look better and cost less short term.
- Replace the entire window. If frames are rotten, worn, or poorly insulated, it can be better value to change the whole assembly, especially if security or ventilation hardware needs an upgrade.

DIY is most realistic for the first option, swapping the sealed unit, and even then only when you can access the beads and measure correctly. Drilling and venting tends to be a specialized service with mixed results. Full window replacement is a bigger joinery job and rarely practical for a novice.

When DIY makes sense

A homeowner with a few tools can often replace a sealed unit in a beaded uPVC window. On many modern uPVC frames, the glazing beads clip in and out from the inside. With patience, care, and a bit of leverage from a stiff putty knife, you can remove the beads, lift out the blown unit, bed in a new one, and refit the beads. Aluminium frames vary: some use gaskets you can roll back. Timber sashes might be held by glazing beads pinned or nailed in, or by putty on older windows. Timber is doable for a careful DIYer too, but you’ll be dealing with paint touch-ups, bedding compound, and sometimes brittle old beads.

Where DIY gets hairy is with heavy, large panes, toughened units that need correct markings for safety, or windows on upper floors with awkward access. Anything above ground floor invites risk, from dropping a glass unit to losing your footing on a ladder. If you’re not comfortable with manual handling and safe access, bring in a pro.

Tools and materials you’ll need

For a straightforward beaded uPVC window, the basics are simple: glazing paddle or stiff putty knife, a couple of suction cups for handling glass, soft packers, tape measure with millimeter accuracy, and silicone-safe cleaning fluid. On timber, you might add a multi-tool for cutting paint lines, glazing points or pins, and linseed oil putty or a modern low-modulus glazing silicone designed for sealed units. I keep a couple of non-marking wedges and a rubber mallet to seat beads without bruising the frame. If the beads feel immovable, pause and check which bead is meant to come out first; there’s usually a sequence.

Measuring matters more than muscle

Most failed DIY attempts trace back to one mistake: poor measurements. Ordering a sealed unit 3 mm too large is a recipe for cracked beads, strained sashes, or a glass unit that simply won’t go in. Too small and the unit rattles,

leaks, or leaves you with an unsightly gap.

Measure the visible glass size (daylight opening), add the depth to the hidden edge under the beads, and triple-check whether the frame takes a 20 mm, 24 mm, 28 mm, or another thickness of unit. Many uPVC windows use 28 mm units. Older ones might be 20 or 24 mm. A neat trick: if you can remove one bead without risk, pop it and measure the actual unit thickness with a caliper or a stacking of feeler gauges. Note whether it's a toughened or laminated unit, which is required for doors, low-level glazing, bathrooms, and near stairs. Look for a kite mark or safety stamp on the glass, usually in a corner. If a unit without safety marking was installed where safety glass is required, replace like-for-like safety-wise, not like-for-like by mistake.

On big spans, consider warm-edge spacer color to match existing units. A glossy black spacer on a room full of grey can stand out. These details make repairs look seamless.

A practical view of costs

For a standard window, a new DGU typically runs £60 to £150 in the UK, depending on size, glass spec, and whether it's toughened. Labour from a local glazier might be £60 to £120 per unit if access is simple. Prices vary regionally and have nudged up in recent years. A DIYer can save the labour, but factor your time, the cost of suction cups and any damaged beads you'll need to replace. If your window is part of a matching set facing the road, consider replacing two or three units together so the tint and spacer lines match. The cost per unit often drops with quantity.

The truth about de-misting kits and quick fixes

There are kits and services that promise to clear the fog by drilling microscopic holes and adding vents. In fairness, I've seen this give cosmetic relief, especially when the priority is making a window viewable again before a house sale or while saving for a full repair. But the performance does not match a sealed unit. In winter, the ventilated cavity can draw moisture back in, and the mist may return. As a "holdover" solution, fine. As a long-term fix, not my recommendation unless the budget is very tight and the window is hard to source.

Pros and cons of DIY versus professional repair

Here's a clean comparison that reflects how these jobs play out on actual houses I've worked on.

- DIY benefits:
- Lower cost on simple, ground-floor units with removable beads.
- Flexibility on timing, no waiting for a slot.

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- Personal satisfaction and control over matching specs.
- DIY downsides:

- Risk of ordering the wrong size or spec, especially safety glass requirements.
- Potential to damage beads, frames, or sashes, which pushes costs higher.
- No comeback if the unit fails early due to handling or bedding errors.
- Professional benefits:
- Faster diagnosis of edge cases, frame issues, or drainage blockages that triggered the failure.
- Access to better warranties on the sealed unit and labour.
- Safer handling of heavy or high-level glass, and compliance with building regulations.
- Professional downsides:
- Higher upfront cost.
- Scheduling and lead times for measuring and fitting, typically a week or two for manufacturing the unit.

A safe, minimal step-by-step for a standard beaded uPVC window

Only use this if you can access the window safely, and your beads are the clip-in type. If you're unsure, stop and get advice. This is one of the two lists allowed in this article and is concise by design.

- Confirm the unit thickness, safety glass requirements, and spacer color. Order the new sealed unit with low-E coating to match existing performance.
- Remove internal glazing beads in the correct sequence, usually starting with the longest bead. Use a glazing paddle to avoid gouging the frame.
- Lift out the old unit with suction cups. Keep it upright. Check drainage slots and clear debris or insect nests.
- Dry-fit the new unit on packers, ensuring even gaps and correct orientation for any low-E or patterned glass. Press beads back in with a rubber mallet, finishing with the shortest bead.
- Check operation of the sash and that the gasket sits tight against the glass all around. Clean with a non-solvent glass cleaner.

If the beads won't seat fully, do not force them. You may have the wrong thickness unit or an oversized pane that needs trimming at the factory, not on site.

Don't forget the root cause

Replacing the glass without addressing the reason it failed is like changing a tyre without removing the nail. Inspect the sill's drainage paths, called weep holes, for dirt or paint blockages. On timber, look for hairline cracks where water gets behind paint. For uPVC, check the gasket condition. A flattened or shrunken gasket can hold rainwater against the unit edge. If you notice black mold on the frame reveals, review ventilation in the room. In kitchens and bathrooms, faulty extractor fans and blocked trickle vents raise indoor humidity and stress the glass-cavity equilibrium.

Energy performance: should you upgrade while you're at it?

If the window's older than a decade, you likely have a basic sealed unit. Upgrading to a low-emissivity coated unit with argon fill and a warm-edge spacer can cut heat loss noticeably. In rough figures, a modern A-rated double glazed unit might have a center-pane U-value near 1.1 to 1.2 W/m²K, compared to 2.7 or worse for old units. The

real-world difference shows up as fewer cold downdrafts near the window in winter and less condensation on the frame.

Talk to your supplier about glass makeup. On a south-facing room that overheats, consider a solar-control coating that trims summer gain. In noise-prone areas, swap one pane to a different thickness to break up sound waves. These tweaks add modest cost but are hard to retrofit later.

What about “misted double glazing repairs” in listed buildings or unusual frames?

Period homes often have conservation rules. If your windows are secondary glazed or part of a listed facade, replacing a sealed unit can require approval, especially if the original design included slender glazing bars. In many cases, the repair is still possible with slimline units designed to mimic single glazing. Work with a specialist who can supply documentation for the conservation officer.

For steel windows, or modern slim aluminium with internal gaskets, the process differs. You might need factory-approved gaskets and exact sightline spacers so the unit sits at the right depth. I’ve rescued a few DIY attempts where a well-intentioned owner installed a standard unit that pushed the glass out of the bead line by 2 mm. It looks minor until the winter wind whistles through that gap or the sash won’t close.

Red flags that point straight to a professional

If your window is on a stairwell half-landing with a drop below, if the sash is warped and binds against the frame, or if you see cracks radiating from a corner of the glass, do not attempt removal solo. Toughened glass can shatter into small cubes when mishandled. Laminated glass behaves differently and is heavier than it looks. Any mist within a large patio door, bi-fold, or bay window earns a site visit. On these, alignment and packer placement are critical. Poor packing can load the glass edge and cause premature failure or even damage the frame.



Common mistakes I see, and how to avoid them

Ordering by overall frame size rather than the sealed unit size is the leader in the clubhouse. The second is fitting without correct packers. The glass needs to sit on setting blocks to carry its weight and to maintain drainage. Without them, water can pool at the bottom edge, saturating the spacer and desiccant. Over-compressing gaskets

is another mistake, often caused by hammering beads into place against an oversized unit. This crushes the gasket, reduces lifespan, and sometimes distorts the sash enough to affect locking points.

On timber, paint bridging between frame and bead can trap water at the glass edge. Always cut the paint line before bead removal, then repaint with a fine bead of flexible sealant to shed water outward.

The warranty angle and paperwork worth keeping

Many installers label units with the date and manufacturer etched in a corner. Take a clear photo before you remove anything. If your window is part of a building regulations-compliant installation, your FENSA or CERTASS paperwork and receipts can [Double Glazing Repairs](#) help with a claim, even if the original company has ceased trading and there's an insurance-backed warranty. Keep the invoice for your new unit too. If you sell the property, buyers often ask about window ages and specs. Having proof can smooth the process.

Where a simple repair isn't enough

Sometimes a blown unit exposes bigger issues. If the frame sills puddle water, the weep holes may be blocked or missing. I've seen incorrectly installed windows with no drainage path at all, causing repeated failures every two to three years. In timber, rot at the lower rails can be disguised by paint. Push a small awl into suspect wood; if it sinks easily, you'll need a splice repair or sash replacement before fitting a new sealed unit. On uPVC, failed reinforcement or cracked corners might mean the sash has lost its geometry. Replacing glass won't fix that. In those cases, full sash or window replacement is justified.

How to choose a repair company, if you don't DIY

Reliable firms tend to measure accurately, discuss safety glass where required, and talk you through packer placement and spacer choices. If someone rushes to suggest drilling to vent without discussing replacement, ask why. Look for clear lead times, typically 5 to 10 working days for unit manufacture, and a written guarantee on the sealed unit, often 5 years. Ask if they'll dispose of the old unit responsibly. Glass with a broken seal often still has gas residues and should be recycled properly.

Final thoughts from the job site

You can fix blown double glazing yourself in the right circumstances: ground-floor, beaded frames, straightforward sizes, and a steady hand. The savings are real, and the work is more satisfying than you might expect. But there's a difference between clearing the fog and restoring performance. A proper replacement sealed unit, correctly packed and seated, restores insulation, looks clean, and lasts years. Shortcuts tend to show up again when the weather turns.

When people ask, Can you fix blown double glazing DIY, I tell them to start with accurate measurements and a realistic assessment of their window type. If the job feels slightly out of reach, a local glazier can often supply and fit for a fair price, with fewer pitfalls. And if you do go DIY, treat the frame and drainage with as much respect [Misted Window Repairs](#) as the glass. A well-fitted unit only stays sound if the window around it lets water out, not in. That detail, more than any miracle sealant, decides how long your clear view lasts.

