

If you have a window that looks like it woke up with a hangover, hazy and streaked between the panes, you're probably dealing with blown double glazing. That foggy look isn't on the surface, it's trapped inside the sealed unit. When the seal fails, moist air gets in, the desiccant inside the spacer saturates, and you see misting, mineral trails, or little droplets that never wipe away. The good news: you can diagnose the problem yourself with a careful inspection, then decide whether to repair the sealed unit, adjust hardware, or address ventilation and drainage. The better news: you don't always need a full window replacement. Often, Misted Double Glazing Repairs, handled by a competent glazier, restore thermal performance and clarity without tearing out the frame.

I have repaired, specified, and inspected hundreds of uPVC, timber, and aluminium windows. The pattern is consistent. Most "blown" units fail because of age, thermal stress, or blocked drainage that keeps the glazing perennially damp. Hardware alignment and poor installation often make things worse. Below is a practical, step-by-step inspection checklist that covers what to look for, what it tells you, and what to do next.

What "blown" really means

Double glazing depends on a hermetic seal around the two panes. Between the panes sits a spacer bar packed with desiccant, and the void holds air or a gas like argon. When the perimeter seal breaks down, the unit takes on moisture, the desiccant saturates, and the inside surfaces fog with temperature swings. That's a blown unit. If only the room side or outside surface looks wet and wipes clean, that isn't a blown unit; that's surface condensation due to indoor humidity, cold weather, or poor airflow.

I mention this because misdiagnosis costs people money. I've been called to "replace" windows that only needed trickle vents opened and a bathroom extractor repaired. Get the diagnosis right first, then choose the most efficient path to a fix.

Quick signs you can spot from a few steps away

Stand a couple of meters back and look at the glass at a shallow angle. Tilt your head slightly and catch reflections from a light source, such as the sky or a lamp. A healthy sealed unit looks consistently clear. A unit that has failed shows patchy misting, crescent-shaped fog, or crystalline trails that look like snail tracks between the panes. Try the same view in the early morning or late afternoon when the temperature gradient is larger. That's when failed seals betray themselves most clearly.

Some glazing has low-e coatings and warm-edge spacers that can hide early misting. If you suspect a problem but cannot see it, move to the next steps and check during different weather conditions. Misting often comes and goes at first, then becomes permanent.

Tools and timing

You don't need lab gear. A flashlight, a thin card or mirror, a short length of thread, and a notepad go a long way. Pick two moments in a typical week: a cool morning and a damp evening. If you can, pick a breezy day and a still day. Seal failure interacts with temperature and humidity, so you want a varied look.

The inspection, step by step

Use the sequence below. It limits unnecessary dismantling and makes later findings easier to interpret.

First pass: glass surfaces and quick tests

Second pass: frame, seals, and drainage Third pass: hardware and movement Fourth pass: environmental factors
Fifth pass: documentation and decisions

First pass: glass surfaces and quick tests

Start simple. Wipe both faces of the glass with a clean, dry microfiber cloth. If the haze wipes off, you're dealing with surface condensation or dirt, not a blown unit. If you can see droplets or streaks inside the cavity that ignore your cloth, that's internal moisture.

Shine a flashlight across the pane from a steep angle. Internal mist scatters light and looks milky, while surface moisture produces clear, round beads. If you see fine crystalline deposits that look like faint frost patterns or mineral fans, the unit has been taking on moisture for months, maybe years. Those marks are from minerals evaporating inside, and they rarely disappear even if the unit dries for a short spell.

Do the reflection test with a small torch or by facing a window at night toward an indoor lamp. Double glazing gives you multiple reflections. If low-e coating is present, one reflection looks slightly different in color. That's normal and tells you the unit type, not its health. What you're looking for is uniformity. A failed unit often shows a dull section where the inside pane has a film of moisture.

Take your time with windows that get full sun. I've seen south-facing units mist in the cool morning, clear at midday, then mist again after sunset. Write down when the fog appears and how it behaves. That pattern will help a technician choose replacement glass and advise on shading or ventilation.

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Second pass: frame, seals, and drainage

Even the best glass fails early when water sits in the frame. Modern uPVC and aluminium frames, and many timber systems, rely on weep holes and channels to drain any incidental water. When those get blocked by paint, insects, or debris, moisture hangs around the edge of the sealed unit, chewing at the primary and secondary seals.

Open the window if it's an opener. Look along the bottom rail for elongated slots or small round holes that lead outside. Dribble a teaspoon of water near a weep hole and check the exterior for a quick drip. If you see no drip, gently probe the holes with a plastic coffee stirrer or a trimmed cable tie, not metal, which can scratch coating. Repeat the water test. If still no drip, you have a blockage deeper in the channel, which can be cleared by a glazier removing beading and cleaning the track.

Check the perimeter gaskets. They should sit snug against the glass with no splits, hardening, or shrinkage that pulls the corners back. Rubber that has gone chalky or stiff no longer presses tight and lets water gather. Timber beads deserve special attention: look for hairline gaps at the miters, failed sealant lines, and any softness when pressed with a fingernail. A frame that flexes too much will also stress the unit from the corners, the most common place for sealant failure.

On older aluminium windows, look for thermal break issues and evidence of cold bridging. You might feel a temperature gradient on the frame itself. Persistent condensation along the bottom bead in winter often means poor drainage and drives early failure, especially where spacer bars are metallic and conduct heat.

If you notice dirt or staining within the internal spacer area, especially at the bottom edge, the unit likely failed long ago. That staining is effectively permanent, and even if the window clears on warm days, optical quality won't recover.

Third pass: hardware and movement

Poor alignment makes a good sealed unit act like a bad one. When a casement sags or a tilt-and-turn is out of square, compression against the weather seals goes uneven. That invites water ingress and pushes moisture around the glazing area.

Close the sash gently and watch the gap along the top and latch side. The reveal should be even. If the handle needs a shove to lock, or if you see the frame flex, the keeps may be too tight or misaligned. A glazier or locksmith can adjust the cams or hinges. On uPVC, heel-and-toe packing might be necessary to take the weight of the glass correctly so the sash doesn't drop over time.

I've corrected several "misted" complaints simply by redistributing packers and easing hinges. That doesn't fix a blown unit, but it stops the next one failing early. If an installer didn't pack beneath the hinge side and lock side appropriately, the sash twists as temperatures change, stressing the sealant line of the IGU, especially in large panes above 1.2 meters wide.

Test trickle vents. If they're clogged or closed year-round, humid rooms like kitchens and bathrooms push moisture toward any cold pane. While this won't blow a unit by itself, it accelerates fogging after the first micro-leak starts.

Fourth pass: environmental factors

Before you blame the glass, check the room. I've seen brand-new units look "misted" every morning because the occupants dried clothes indoors without ventilation, then kept the blinds tight against the glass. Closed blinds trap cold air against the pane and raise humidity. You get surface condensation that looks like a blown unit in low light.

Assess humidity. You don't need a hygrometer to sense a problem, but if you own one, aim for 40 to 55 percent relative humidity indoors. If you consistently sit above 60 percent in winter, address extraction and airflow. Kitchen hoods should vent to the outside, not just recirculate. Bathroom fans should run long enough after showers to pull down moisture. A 15 to 30 minute overrun helps.

Check the room orientation. North-facing rooms in the UK and Ireland, or south-facing rooms in the Southern Hemisphere, stay cooler and show more condensation. Large panes in shaded elevations need good drainage and high quality warm-edge spacers, or they will be the first to show failure if the seal quality was marginal.

Finally, look for movement around the building: new extensions settle, and frames follow. I inspected a bay where only the center unit misted. The cill had dropped a few millimeters after a damp-proof course repair, twisting the frame just enough to crack the corner sealant bead of the IGU. The cure involved packing under the cill and replacing the single blown unit, not a full window swap.

Fifth pass: documentation and decisions

Take clear photos of each suspect pane in different light. Note the date, weather, and whether the pane was sunlit or shaded. If you can capture the mineral trails, even better. That record helps a Double Glazing Repairs specialist quote the right replacement and anticipate spacer type, gas fill, and low-e coating based on reflection color and brand identifiers. Some spacer bars have manufacturer codes or dates etched faintly. A photo at a raking angle can reveal those markings.

This is also where you add up the evidence. A pane that shows permanent internal haze, consistent across weather, with drainage working and normal humidity, is a straightforward blown unit. A pane that clears fully on dry days and only mists after a steamy shower probably needs ventilation tweaks more than glass.

Can you fix blown double glazing?

People ask this in two senses. Can you recover the original unit? Or can you restore the window to full function without replacing the entire frame? The honest answer to the first is no, not in a way that preserves factory thermal performance. Some services drill small holes, vent the cavity, and inject desiccant. I've seen those jobs temporarily improve clarity, but they leave you with a non-hermetic unit that is sensitive to weather and usually fogs again. It also undermines the low U-value you paid for. Moist air in the cavity increases convection and degrades the coating's effectiveness.

To the second question: yes. [Cat Flap Installation](#) In most cases you can keep the frame and replace only the sealed unit. That's the heart of many Misted Double Glazing Repairs. A competent glazier measures the sightlines, spacer thickness, and glass makeup, removes beads, swaps the IGU, reinstalls packers to support the sash correctly, and reseats the beads. On timber, beads may be pried and re-pinned with a fresh bead of sealant. On aluminium systems, a pressure plate may be removed and gaskets renewed.

If your frames are in poor shape, warped, or thermally obsolete, then a full frame replacement may be sensible. But if the issue is isolated to the sealed unit and the frame drains well, a like-for-like or upgraded IGU is the economical and greener choice.



The practical inspection checklist

Below is a compact checklist you can print or screenshot. Follow it methodically, then refer to the decision guidance after.

- Wipe test and flashlight scan: confirm if haze is inside the cavity, note patterns and timing.
- Drainage and gasket check: verify weep holes discharge, gaskets are supple and continuous, beads sealed.
- Hardware and alignment: ensure even gaps, smooth locking, proper packer support, functional trickle vents.
- Environmental review: note humidity habits, extractor function, blinds or heavy curtains against glass.
- Documentation: photos in different light, spacer markings, measurements, and notes on weather correlation.

Use this to avoid guesswork. A 15 minute check can save a full window quote when a sealed unit replacement will do.

Making sense of what you found

Let's translate those observations into action. If you recorded permanent internal moisture, mineral trails, and working drainage with normal indoor humidity, the unit is blown. Contact a Double Glazing Repairs service and ask for a quote to replace the IGU only. Provide your photos, rough pane size, and frame type. Ask for warm-edge spacers and low-e spec equal or better than the original. If you have multiple units from the same era, request a price for two or three at once. It's common for siblings to fail within 12 to 24 months of each other.

If the misting appears only at certain times and you have poor ventilation, fix the airflow first. Clean trickle vents, run extractors longer, crack windows during high humidity tasks, and leave blinds a finger's width from the glass to allow circulation. Reassess after a week. If misting persists inside the cavity, proceed to replacement.



If drainage fails or gaskets are shrunken, correct those issues immediately. Standing water around the unit accelerates failure. Sometimes you can revive a marginal unit by restoring dry conditions, but treat that as a grace period, not a cure. Make the frame watertight and plan for a new IGU if internal haze has already formed.

If hardware is dragging or reveals are uneven, have hinges and keeps adjusted. On uPVC sashes, ask the technician about heel-and-toe packing to support the glass diagonally from lower hinge to upper lock. Proper packing distributes load so the sash doesn't twist and pry at the glazing edges.

Costs, time, and worthwhile upgrades

For a typical domestic casement with a clear float and a low-e coated inner pane, a sealed unit replacement in the UK often falls in the range of £80 to £200 per pane, depending on size, thickness, gas fill, and access. Large panes, laminated or toughened safety glass, or shaped units cost more. Labour to swap beads and re-pack can be under an hour for a standard casement, longer for stuck beads, timber frames, or bays.

Ask your glazier about warm-edge spacers if your existing units have metallic spacers. The cost difference is modest, and the improvement at the edge temperature is noticeable in winter. If you live near a busy road or have security concerns, this is a chance to specify laminated inner panes, which improve both security and noise control. The thermal hit is minimal with modern coatings, and the comfort gain can be real.

Some homeowners worry about mixing old and new units in the same elevation. That's usually fine. Low-e reflection tint can vary slightly, but unless you have a glass curtain wall, most people never spot the difference.

Install quality matters as much as glass quality

I've seen brand-name IGUs fail early because they were wedged hard with no packers under the bottom edge, or because a fitter sealed over an external weep hole with a generous bead of silicone. Similarly, I've seen budget units last 15 years because the frame drained and the sash sat square. When you book repairs, look for someone who talks about packers, drainage, and reveals, not just the glass spec.

A small anecdote: a client with a Victorian bay had three misted panes in the lower section. Previous fitters had sealed the outside to "stop drafts," inadvertently blocking capillary drainage. The frames looked fine, but the units were bathing at their bottom edges. We cleared the drainage, opened the paint-sealed vent paths, replaced the IGUs, and the new ones stayed clear. That job taught the homeowner that sometimes the best Double Glazing Repairs start with a screwdriver and patience, not a catalogue.

When a full replacement makes sense

There are times when replacing only the IGU isn't wise. If the frame is warped and can't be adjusted, if the timber is rotten beyond a local splice, or if the aluminium lacks a thermal break and the room is always cold, direct your money toward a proper window upgrade. Similarly, if multiple panes are failing across the property and the frames are first-generation uPVC with brittle hardware and no modern seals, whole-window replacement may win on total life-cycle cost.

Energy performance targets matter if you're insulating the rest of the house. Pairing a top-tier roof and wall insulation with old frames can leave windows as the glaring weak link. Talk to an installer who can quantify U-values and advise on glazing suited to your climate. You can still stage the work: start with the worst rooms and any safety-critical units, then plan the rest.

Safety checks and special cases

Toughened or laminated glass is required by building codes in certain locations: near doors, in low-level panes, or in bathrooms. If a blown unit sits in a critical location, confirm the safety spec before ordering a replacement. Look for a discreet stamp or kite mark in a corner. If none is visible, assume safety glass may be required and ask your glazier to assess. Getting this wrong can void insurance and create [Double Glazing Repairs](#) hazards.

For large south-facing units, consider thermal stress. Dark blinds closed tight during strong sun can create uneven heating, which sometimes cracks an inner pane. I've investigated cracks running straight across the glass at quarter points, classic thermal fracture patterns. Slightly tilting slats or leaving a small air gap between blind and glass reduces the risk.

A short decision guide

- Internal haze that doesn't wipe off, with functioning drainage and normal humidity: order a sealed unit replacement.
- Intermittent mist that coincides with showers, cooking, or closed blinds: address ventilation and shading, then reassess.
- Blocked weep holes, shrunk gaskets, or pooling water: fix drainage and seals immediately, then replace any units already showing internal marks.

- Misaligned sashes or stiff locking: adjust hardware and repack glass to prevent future stress on new units.
- Multiple failures plus poor, outdated frames: consider whole-window replacement for performance and longevity.

Aftercare that keeps new units clear

Once you've replaced a blown unit, keep the environment kind. Keep weep holes clear. Don't paint over external joints designed to move and drain. Run extractors during and after moisture-heavy activities. If you're a plant lover, try to keep foliage a short distance from glass to allow airflow. If blinds live close to the pane, leave a slim gap for air. Check trickle vents seasonally; dust and pollen clog them faster than you think.

Every autumn, do a quick five-minute walkaround. Pour a splash of water into each drainage channel, watch for discharge, and wipe the frame gaskets with a damp cloth. That tiny routine stretches the life of seals far beyond the manufacturer's minimums.

The bottom line

A blown double glazed unit is annoying, but it's fixable. The smartest path is methodical: confirm the failure, protect the frame by restoring drainage and alignment, and specify a like-for-like or improved sealed unit. Resist quick fixes that drill holes into the cavity and promise miracles. They trade short-term clarity for long-term performance. Work with a professional who understands packers, pressure, and water management, not just glass sizes.

With a careful inspection and a clear plan, Double Glazing Repairs become straightforward and cost-effective. And the next time someone asks, Can you Fix Blown Double Glazing, you'll have the practical answer: you can't un-blow the old unit, but you can restore the window to full health by replacing the sealed unit, tuning the frame, and keeping water moving where it should. That approach keeps your rooms warmer, your bills lower, and your view sharp for years.