What to Do When a Window Breaks Before Help Arrives

Assess the Damage and Stay Safe

A broken window can be unsettling, especially if it happens unexpectedly. Whether it is a cracked double-glazed pane or a shattered toughened glass panel, the first moments matter. The goal is to keep everyone inside safe and prevent further damage to the property until a professional can take over. This article walks through the key points to check in the minutes after a window breaks.

Before doing anything else, stop and look at the scene. Are there large shards of glass on the floor? Is the window frame still intact? Can you see any sharp edges that could cause injury? Take a moment to assess the situation from a safe distance. If the break is large or the window is on an upper floor, do not approach it directly. The risk of falling glass or a collapsing frame is real. Keep children and pets away from the area entirely.

Check for Injuries First

The most important step is to check if anyone has been hurt. Glass can travel surprisingly far when it breaks, so look around the room and in adjacent areas. If someone has a cut, apply pressure with a clean cloth and seek medical help if needed. Do not try to remove glass from a wound yourself. Once you have confirmed that everyone is safe, you can turn your attention to the window itself.

Secure the Room and Stop Draughts

If the window is completely broken, the room will quickly lose heat. Draughts can also carry small glass fragments further into the house. Close the door to the affected room if possible, and put a towel or blanket along the bottom of the door to stop air movement. This simple step helps keep the rest of the house warm and reduces the spread of glass dust. If the window is only cracked but still intact, avoid opening or closing it until a professional has inspected it.

Inspect the Window Frame and Hinges

Once the immediate safety concerns are handled, look at the window frame and its hardware. A broken pane can put unusual stress on the window hinge and the window handle. Check whether the frame is still square and whether the hinges are still attached to the wall or the sash. If the frame is damaged, the whole window may need to be replaced rather than just the glass. If the frame appears sound, the job is likely a straightforward glass replacement.



Also check the perimeter seal of the window. In double-glazed units, the seal holds the insulating gas between the panes. If the seal is broken, the unit will fog up and lose its thermal efficiency. You might see condensation between the panes or a white film on the inside of the glass. These are signs that the insulating glass unit has failed and needs to be replaced as a whole, not just the outer pane.

Decide on Temporary Boarding

If the break leaves a hole in the window, you will need to cover it temporarily. This keeps the weather out and makes the property more secure. A piece of plywood or a sturdy plastic sheet works well. Measure the opening and cut the board slightly larger than the frame so it overlaps the edges. Screw or nail it into the frame, not into the wall. Do not use tape alone; it will not hold in wind or rain. Temporary boarding is a short-term measure. It is not a permanent fix and should only stay in place until a glazing professional arrives.

If you are not comfortable working at height or handling the board safely, leave the window uncovered and stay in another room. The risk of falling is not worth the temporary protection. In that case, call a 24-hour locksmith or glazing service that can send someone to board up the window for you.

Look at the Type of Glass

Different windows use different types of glass. A standard window in a modern home usually has double glazing, which is two panes of glass separated by a spacer and sealed with a perimeter seal. Toughened glass is stronger and breaks into small, blunt pieces rather than

sharp shards. If the broken glass is toughened, the pieces are less dangerous to handle, but the window still needs to be replaced.

If the broken window is an old single-pane window, the glass is thin and breaks into large, sharp shards. These are more hazardous and more likely to cause injury. Always wear thick gloves and sturdy shoes when cleaning up broken glass. Do not use a vacuum cleaner on dry glass fragments; the sharp edges can damage the vacuum or spread dust into the air. Instead, use a broom and dustpan, then wipe the area with a damp cloth to pick up fine splinters.

Check for Hidden Damage

A broken window can sometimes cause damage that is not immediately obvious. Look at the window frame for cracks or splits. Check the wall around the window for signs of impact, especially if the break was caused by something hitting the glass. If the frame is damaged, the new pane may not fit correctly, and the window may not open or close properly. A professional will need to assess the frame and decide whether it can be repaired or needs to be replaced entirely.

Also check the window handle and locking mechanism. A sudden break can knock the handle out of alignment or break the lock. If the window will not close securely, the property is vulnerable to intrusion. In an emergency, a locksmith can help secure the window until a full repair is carried out. For example, Arriva Locksmiths offers 24-hour emergency services in Cannock and within a 25-mile radius, covering both locksmith and glazing needs.



Decide Whether to Clean Up or Wait

Once you have assessed the situation and applied any temporary boarding, you need to decide whether to clean up the broken glass or leave it for the professional. If the glass is in small pieces and you can safely sweep them away, do so. This makes the area safer for anyone walking through. But if the glass is in large, sharp shards, or if it is mixed with debris from the frame, it may be better to wait. A glazing professional will have the right tools and protective equipment to remove the glass safely without damaging the frame further.

If you do decide to clean up, work from the outside edges of the debris toward the centre. Use a dustpan and a broom, and dispose of the glass in a thick cardboard box or a metal bin. Label the container clearly so no one puts their hand inside. Never put broken window glass into a plastic bin bag; the shards can cut through the bag and injure the person handling it.

Consider the Security Risk

A broken window is an open invitation to intruders. Even if the break is small, a determined person can enlarge the hole to gain entry. If the window is on the ground floor or easily accessible, you should treat it as a security risk. Temporary boarding helps, but it is not a permanent solution. If you cannot board the window yourself, or if the break is in a difficult location, call a professional who can secure the property quickly.

In some cases, the window may be part of a commercial property or a rental home. The responsibility for securing the property may fall on the landlord or the business owner. If you are a tenant, contact your landlord immediately. If you own the property, your insurance policy may require you to take reasonable steps to prevent further damage or theft. Keep a record of what you did and any receipts for materials used in the temporary fix.

When to Call a Professional

Once the immediate situation is under control, you will need to arrange for a proper repair. A glass replacement job involves more than just fitting a new pane. The professional will measure the opening, check the frame, select the correct type of glass, and install it with the right seals and hardware. If the window is double-glazed, the whole unit may need to be replaced, not just the broken pane.

If you live in the Cannock area or within 25 miles, **Arriva Locksmiths** provides 24-hour emergency glazing services. They can handle both domestic and commercial windows, including broken double glazing, shattered toughened glass, and damaged window frames. Their team can also help with window hinges and handles that have been damaged by the break. Having a reliable contact for emergency glazing gives you peace of mind, especially if the break happens outside normal working hours.



Prevent Future Breaks

Once the repair is done, it is worth thinking about how to prevent a similar situation in the future. Check the condition of your other windows regularly. Look for signs of wear in the perimeter seal, any condensation between panes, or cracks in the frame. If a window hinge feels stiff or a window handle does not turn smoothly, get it repaired before it causes stress on the glass. Small problems left unattended can lead to a break later on.

If you live in an area with high winds or frequent storms, consider installing impact-resistant glass or laminated glass in vulnerable windows. These types of glass are designed to hold together even when they break, reducing the risk of injury and keeping the property secure until

a replacement can be arranged. They are more expensive than standard glass, but the added safety may be worth it for ground-floor windows or large picture windows.

A broken window is never convenient, but knowing what to do in the first few minutes can make a difference. Stay calm, check for injuries, secure the room, and assess the damage. Then take steps to protect the property until a professional arrives. With the right approach, you can minimise the disruption and get your window repaired without unnecessary stress.