

If you wake to a pale halo of moisture trapped inside your windows, you already know how maddening misted double glazing can be. It blurs the view, drags down your home's appearance, and quietly wastes energy. I've spent years diagnosing and fixing these failures for homeowners, landlords, and small commercial sites. The pattern repeats: a failed seal lets moist air into the cavity, the desiccant inside the spacer saturates, and the window starts fogging between the panes. Many people jump straight to replacement. Sometimes that is right. Often it isn't. With the right approach, misted double glazing repairs can restore clarity, improve thermal performance, and prevent a repeat performance.

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This guide explains how to spot root causes, what repair options actually work, how to decide between repair and replacement, and how to avoid future fogging. It folds in practical details, not just theory, because the difference between a quick fix and a long-term solution usually sits in the fine print.

Why windows mist up in the first place

Modern insulated glazing units, or IGUs, are sealed sandwiches. Two panes, a spacer bar around the edge, a cavity filled with air or argon, and a perimeter seal that keeps moisture out and gas in. The spacer holds a desiccant that dries any residual moisture left at manufacture. When that perimeter seal ages or is compromised by movement, ultraviolet exposure, or rough installation, airborne moisture creeps in. The desiccant buys you time, sometimes years, until it becomes saturated. After that, any cold morning becomes a foggy morning.

You will hear different terms: misted, fogged, blown. A "blown" unit usually means the seal has failed enough that the unit no longer performs thermally. The signature sign is condensation between the panes that you cannot wipe away on either side. External condensation is not the same thing. On high-performance glass, a film of dew on the outside can appear on still, humid mornings, especially in autumn. That outer dew is a sign of good insulation. Moisture trapped between panes is not.

Certain conditions accelerate failure. Dark south or west elevations that bake in summer see more ultraviolet and bigger daily temperature swings. Timber frames that move seasonally can stress the seal. Frames set out of square force units to twist slightly, which opens hairline gaps that expand over time. Poor drainage in the glazing rebate lets water stand against the seal, a quiet killer.

How to confirm you have a blown unit

As a rule of thumb, if you see moisture or cloudy streaks inside the cavity on more than two mornings in a typical week, the unit is compromised. Smears that look like snail trails or a granular haze that never wipes away also suggest desiccant dust migrating onto the glass. If you're unsure, shine a small torch at an angle in the evening. If the glow reflects off internal moisture or shows a diffuse halo between panes, that is a tell.

Temperature can help diagnose. On a cold day, run your hand around the inner pane. A failed unit often feels uniformly cool rather than having a gentle gradient. Infrared thermometers exaggerate this effect, though you

should not rely on them alone. Another low-tech trick is to put a simple data logger on the inner glass for a few days. If the interior glass temperature tracks the room less than a healthy window in the same orientation, you likely have a loss of gas and a saturated cavity.

For a proper survey, I carry a glazing shovel, a compact mirror, a torch, and a set of calipers. Measure the visible glass, then add the typical 10 to 12 mm that sits under the glazing beads to estimate unit size. Note any trickle vents or weep holes. Check for blocked drainage. Look for movement in the frame by sighting along the beads. Good notes save a return trip.

Can you fix blown double glazing, or do you need new units?

People ask this in nearly the same words every week: can you fix blown double glazing? The answer is yes, in many cases, but with nuance. There are three broad options with misted double glazing repairs.

First, you can replace just the sealed unit and keep the existing frame. This is the most common route. It restores clarity and thermal performance without touching the frame, and it is far cheaper than a whole window replacement. If your frames are sound, this is often the best value.

Second, you can attempt a "repair-in-place" venting and drying technique. It involves drilling tiny holes in the glass or spacer, flushing the cavity, adding a desiccant, and fitting vents or plugs. This can clear the fog, sometimes for months or even years, but it does not usually restore the original insulating value if the argon is gone, and it may void warranties. I use it selectively, for example in commercial settings where budget is tight and a clear view matters more than peak energy performance, or as a stopgap before larger renovations.

Third, you can replace the entire window. This makes sense when frames are rotten, warped, corroded, or thermally poor, or when security hardware is outdated. Whole replacements unlock improvements like warm-edge spacers, low-e coatings, laminated security glass, and better ventilation control. The price climbs, though, and you will want a competent installer to avoid introducing new problems.

The trick is matching the fix to the actual problem and the customer's goals. If we are dealing with a 10-year-old UPVC frame that still seats square, the beads clip cleanly, and the drainage is good, swapping the IGU will usually give you another decade or more of service. If the frame sags and the hinge has chewed a groove into the sash, a new pane won't last long.

What repairs look like in practice

Replacing a sealed unit is not glamorous work, but it rewards patience. I schedule most jobs for late morning. The sun has warmed the exterior slightly, which makes beads a bit more pliable, and there is less condensate to surprise you.

We start by protecting finishes and flooring. Then remove beads, in the right order, always the shortest first. Glazing tape or packers may hold the unit; expect to ease them gently without levering against the frame face. Once the old unit is out, inspect the rebate. If you see standing water, clear the weep holes. If the tape has perished into sticky strands, clean it thoroughly. A bit of leftover debris is the enemy of a new seal.

Measure the depth of the glazing pocket. Most domestic frames use 24 to 28 mm units, though you see everything from 14 to 40 mm in the wild. Confirm spacer type, especially if you want warm-edge technology. I prefer stainless or composite spacers for better thermal performance than aluminum. Specify low-e soft-coat glass for the inner pane in a cool climate. Argon fill remains a fair balance of performance and cost. Krypton has its place in very narrow cavities, but it rarely pays off in standard retrofits.

Repack the unit so it sits square and centered, with consistent sightlines, and does not bridge the sill packers which must take the weight. Reuse packers if they are sound, otherwise replace with new setting blocks of the correct Shore hardness. Clip beads back in the correct order. Finally, check operation. Sashes should open freely without scuffing or dragging the weather seal.

A vent-and-dry job takes a different shape. We drill discreet holes near the top and bottom corners of the glass or into the spacer edge, use a dehumidifying solution to draw moisture, then leave micro-vents in place or fit clear plugs. It is faster and cheaper than a new unit. Results vary. I have had office suites regain crisp clarity for two winters, then fog once more after a spell of damp weather and nighttime cooling. It is not my first recommendation, but in certain cases it is an acceptable short-term tactic.

The hidden causes that make fogging come back

Anyone can change a pane. Keeping it clear for years takes diagnosis. If the same bay has gone misty twice in five years, do not blame only the glass. Look around the unit.

I often find blocked weep holes on UPVC frames. Dirt, paint, or even spider nests stop drainage. Water then sits against the perimeter seal. In timber frames, failed paint or sealant lets bulk water into the glazing rebate. That moisture cycles with daily heat, driving vapor into the unit edge. On aluminum systems, missing pressure equalization pads or incorrect gaskets tilt the balance.

Movement ruins seals. If a frame is racked even a few millimeters out of square, the sealed unit becomes a stressed parallelogram. Thermal expansion amplifies these forces on sunny days. Over time, the butyl edge seal creeps and opens micro-paths for moisture. I have corrected this with simple packer adjustments, hinge realignment, or on older sashes by adding hinge packers and re-squaring the sash to the frame.

Climate control inside the home matters, too. A house with high indoor humidity will find every leak path. Bathrooms without extraction, kitchens that vent into a recirculating hood only, and laundry rooms without a ducted fan all load the air with moisture. That moisture looks for colder surfaces to condense on, including the window cavity if there is any pathway. Solve the ventilation first, then the glass.

When to repair, when to replace, and what it costs

Costs vary by region and by glass specification, but ballpark values help planning. In many UK and Irish cities, replacing a typical domestic sealed unit in a UPVC frame can run from £90 to £180 for modest sizes, more for large panes or shaped units. Add costs for toughened or laminated glass, and for argon fills with warm-edge spacers the price bumps again. A full window replacement might range from £300 to £1,000 per opening depending on size, frame material, and hardware.

If your frames are younger than 15 years, plumb and square, and you like their appearance, misted double glazing repairs that replace the sealed unit are usually the smart play. If you are renovating and aim to upgrade to higher performance, perhaps with triple glazing or acoustic glass along a busy road, replacement is worth the step up.

Consider energy bills. A home with several blown south-facing units will feel colder and cost more to heat. Restoring low-e and gas fill can shave a noticeable percentage off seasonal heating use, sometimes in the range of 5 to 10 percent for the room in question. Payback is not instant, but comfort improves immediately.

Choosing the right glass and spacer, so it stays clear

The industry has made quiet strides that matter. Early double glazing often used aluminum spacers, which bridge heat and create a cold edge. That cold line becomes the band where condensation starts. Warm-edge spacers in stainless steel or composite reduce that cold edge significantly. If you have struggled with peripheral condensation, specify a warm-edge spacer.

Low-e coatings have improved, too. Soft-coat low-e on the inner pane reflects long-wave heat back into the room, keeping the inner glass warmer. Higher inner surface temperature means less chance of condensation, better comfort, and a more robust unit during cold snaps. If you live in a hot climate, talk to a supplier about tailored low-e that balances solar gain and insulation. Getting the coating right stops rooms from turning into greenhouses while still controlling fog.

Gas fills are not magic, but argon reduces convective currents in the **cstdgrepairs.com Cat Flap Installation** cavity and improves U-values at reasonable cost. If a unit is vented and dried, you will not recover that. It is another reason replacement wins in long-term economics for key rooms.

Finally, ask for a quality perimeter seal. Many manufacturers use a dual-seal system: a primary polyisobutylene (PIB) layer for gas retention and a secondary polyurethane or polysulfide seal for structure. The quality of mixing, application, and cure affects longevity. Reputable fabricators with audited processes produce units that resist UV and seasonal movement better. It is not a place to bargain-hunt down to the last pound.

Installation details that make or break the repair

I have returned to fogged replacements that were only two years old, and the culprit was installation. A few practical notes prevent that.

- Make sure the glazing packers carry the weight on the lower corners, typically at one quarter of the width from each side, rather than letting the unit rest on the frame or bead. Proper load paths prevent twisting the seal.
- Maintain small, continuous drainage routes. If silicone is used, it must not block weep paths. On timber, bed the glass on glazing tape and seal the exterior neatly, leaving water a way out.
- Avoid point pressure. A rogue screw or a hard nib on a bead can pinch the glass edge. That small point becomes a heat and stress riser, often leading to a haze along the edge or even a crack in winter.
- Check the sash alignment and hardware before fitting the new unit. If the sash strains to close, it will likely strain the seal as temperatures shift.
- Record unit sizes and specifications on a simple schedule for the home. Next time something fails, you will save the detective work and reduce ordering mistakes.

These are minor tasks, but they separate a quick fix from a lasting result.

Preventing future fogging: maintenance that actually matters

Windows should be boring. If you do a few small things annually, they usually are. The most effective habits are easy.

Keep weep holes clear. Once a year, run a thin plastic strip or a pipe cleaner through the drainage paths at the bottom of the frame. If water cannot linger, the perimeter seal lives longer. Clean frames with mild detergent rather than solvent, especially near seals and gaskets. Strong solvents dry out rubber and plastics.

Manage indoor humidity. Extract fans in bathrooms and kitchens should actually extract. If your fan feels anemic, upgrade to a unit with 15 to 30 liters per second capacity, and check that the duct runs short and straight to the

outside. During winter, aim for indoor relative humidity around 40 to 50 percent. Higher, and you will chase condensation around the house.

Watch how you close windows. Slammed sashes misalign hinges and multipoint locks. A gentle close and a quick handle turn keep the reveal square. If a sash starts catching, adjust the friction hinges rather than forcing it. Most UPVC hinges have simple adjustment slots.

Inspect exterior sealant on timber and aluminum frames every couple of years. Hairline gaps appear first at the top corners where sun and rain meet. A tidy reseal at the first sign of failure prevents water from getting behind beads and soaking the rebate.

If you are repainting timber, give the glazing edges attention. Paint should kiss the glass slightly to form a capillary-break seal, not stop short and leave a micro-channel for water. A millimeter of overlap is enough.

Edge cases and tricky panes

Some windows misbehave more than others. Large panes, especially picture windows wider than 1.5 meters, see more thermal stress. Here, paying for a higher-spec spacer and careful packing is worth it. In coastal homes, salt accelerates corrosion on metal spacers and hardware. I specify stainless fittings and insist on rigorous washing of exterior frames twice a year.

Rooflights and skylights collect heat on sunny days and radiate it at night. The thermal cycling is harsh. Units with a rigid warm-edge spacer and robust secondary seal last longer in that setting. Take care with external condensation on skylights; it can masquerade as fogging because it appears stubborn. If wiping the outside clears it, the unit is fine.

Toughened and laminated safety glass introduces its own wrinkles. Toughened panes are more tolerant of impact but less friendly to drilling, which rules out many vent-and-dry techniques. Laminated units can fog between the laminate under certain conditions unrelated to the IGU cavity, usually due to edge exposure or poor storage before installation. That requires a different remedy, often replacement.

Historic properties with slimline glazing present a frequent conundrum. Narrow cavities, say 12 mm including both panes and spacer, have less tolerance for errors, and the thermal performance relies heavily on the low-e coating. Pay close attention to factory quality and to packers. On sash windows, weight balancing and cord condition matter because a sash that drops a few millimeters will twist the glazing every time it meets the sill.

Where vent-and-dry has a place

I do not dismiss vent-and-dry out of hand. I have used it for shopfronts where closing for a replacement would reduce trade, and on rental properties to clear a tenant's view ahead of winter while we schedule a proper unit swap in spring. It works best on units that have fogged recently and are not yet heavily stained inside. It works poorly on units with etched mineral tracks, desiccant dust, or spidering patterns of moisture that suggest long-term failure. The cost is typically a fraction of a new unit, and the clarity can return within a day. Just be honest about its limits. It is a cosmetic and temporary measure, not a restoration of insulating performance.

What to ask a contractor before you book

You do not need to become a glazing expert to get a good outcome, but a few focused questions separate competent trades from pretenders.

- What spacer type and seal system do you supply, and can you provide warm-edge options?

- Will you check and clear the frame's drainage and adjust hinges or packers as needed, not just swap the glass?
- How do you measure and verify squareness to avoid stress on the new unit?
- What is the warranty on the sealed unit and on workmanship, and who honors it if the supplier changes?
- Can you provide the glass specification in writing, including low-e coating position, gas fill, and safety glass where required?

A contractor who answers clearly and concisely usually installs clearly and concisely. If the answers are vague, keep looking.

Practical examples from the field

Two recent jobs illustrate the role of context.



A semi-detached house had three misted units in the south-facing lounge. The frames were UPVC, 12 years old, and slightly out of square. The homeowner considered vent-and-dry to save money. We measured, found a 4 mm drop on the hinge side of the main casement, and blocked weep holes dotted with dried paint. We replaced the three sealed units with low-e, argon-filled glass and warm-edge spacers, repacked the hinges, and cleared

drainage. Cost was roughly a third of full window replacement. The next winter, the lounge held a steadier temperature, and there has been no fogging since.

In a small café, the owner could not afford to close for a day during the lead-up to Christmas. Two front units fogged heavily every morning. We used a vent-and-dry method after hours on a Wednesday, drilled near the spacer, flushed, and fitted vents. Clarity returned by Friday. We scheduled full unit replacements for late January, after the busy period. The temporary fix bought time. The permanent fix restored the insulation that mattered for customer comfort in February.

Putting it all together

Fogging is a symptom, not a random curse. When you ask can you fix blown double glazing, the accurate follow-up is how, and for how long. If your frames are sound, replacing the sealed unit is the sweet spot for most homes, especially when you choose modern features such as warm-edge spacers and soft-coat low-e. If budget or timing presses, vent-and-dry can be a bridge, with eyes open about its limits.

The real win lies in preventing future fogging. Keep drainage paths clear. Manage indoor humidity. Make sure sashes sit square and close without strain. Specify the right glass and spacer for your climate. A modest investment in the right details pays off for years.

I have seen hundreds of misted double glazing repairs go right when those basics are observed. Clear views, warmer rooms, quieter nights, and windows that do not demand attention each season. That is the goal. Once you reach it, windows return to being what they should be: a frame for the outside world, not a maintenance project.



If you are weighing options now, take a quick inventory of your frames, note where fogging occurs most, and speak to a contractor who can measure, diagnose, and explain the path forward. With a plan that fits your home, fogging does not have to come back.