

Double glazing should be one of the quiet heroes of your rental. It keeps heat in, drafts out, and tenants happy. When it fails, though, you feel it in complaints about condensation, rooms that never quite warm up, and energy bills that seem to creep. The fix is rarely as simple as a squirt of sealant. Yet, with the right approach, you can extend the life of your windows, budget sensibly, and keep voids to a minimum.

I manage and advise on portfolios ranging from single flats to blocks of 40 units. Over time, the pattern repeats. Repairs on windows get deferred, the first winter exposes the gaps, and then the scramble begins. What follows are the things I wish every landlord knew before the mischief starts, with practical notes on costs, contractor selection, and how to talk to tenants when their view turns cloudy. Along the way we will touch on Can you Fix Blown Double Glazing and the best approach to Misted Double Glazing Repairs, because those are the questions that arrive in my inbox every week.

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What failure looks like, and what it means

If you have tenants reporting water droplets between the panes, that is not surface condensation. The hermetic seal has failed, letting moisture into the sealed unit. The gas that once insulated - argon or krypton in higher spec units - has likely escaped. Heat loss increases. The room feels colder, especially near the glass, so tenants turn the heating up and curtains stay closed to hide the clouding. That drives mold on walls and frames. You end up paying twice, in energy and remedial work.

Sometimes the signs are more subtle. A bead of water along the bottom of the inner pane on cold mornings suggests weak ventilation combined with thermal bridging. Look for cracked or shrunken perimeter gaskets, flaking mastic where the frame meets the masonry, or a sash that has dropped slightly causing a draft at the top corner. On uPVC windows, handles that feel loose or won't lock can point to worn espagnolette gear. Timber sashes show peeling paint and blackened beads caused by trapped moisture. Aluminium frames rarely swell, but their thermal breaks can still fail or become noisy in wind.

Tenants do not always report these issues early. They adapt. Drafts become a rolled-up towel, misting becomes a habit of wiping each morning. Keep your eyes open during mid-term inspections and after tenancies end when curtains are fully open and you can see the glass in morning light.

The anatomy of a double glazed window in practical terms

The piece that fails [Double Glazing Repairs](#) most often is the sealed glass unit, not the entire frame. A glazed unit is two panes separated by a spacer bar, with desiccant inside to absorb residual moisture. When the edge seal cracks or fails, the desiccant saturates and can no longer keep the cavity dry. That is the moment the fog rolls in. Frames - uPVC, timber, aluminium - hold these units and provide structural rigidity, weatherproofing, and locking.

Why this matters for repairs is simple. If the frame is sound, you usually do not need a full window replacement. You need a new sealed unit to fit the existing frame, and perhaps fresh gaskets or packers. The cost difference is

substantial. Replacing a blown unit in a typical casement window might be £80 to £150 for standard sizes. A full window swap could run £450 to £900 depending on material, dimensions, and access. In blocks with controlled facades, full replacements may require freeholder consent and matching existing sightlines, which adds time and money.



Can you fix blown double glazing without replacing the unit?

This is the point where marketing noise makes life difficult. You will see services offering to drill micro-holes in the glass, vent moisture, and reseal. In my experience, that is a short-lived cosmetic fix. It can clear the appearance, yes, but it does not restore the insulating gas or the original thermal performance. In some cases it voids warranties and leaves tiny vents that can clog or discolor. For rentals, where you need longevity and predictable performance, drilling is a false economy nine times out of ten.

If the unit is only lightly misted and the property is due for a larger refurbishment within the year, a temporary visual clear may be tempting. I have seen those treatments limp along for six to twelve months before fog returns. For long-term holding, replace the unit. If you own leasehold flats with strict exterior rules, the replacement route also keeps you [Cat Flap Installation CST Double Glazing Repairs](#) compliant with the original spec.

So, Can you Fix Blown Double Glazing? You can make it look better for a while, but if the goal is to restore thermal performance and stop tenant complaints long-term, the fix is to replace the sealed unit. Save the drill-and-vent approach for outbuildings or workshop windows where appearance is your only concern.

The real-world causes in rentals

In managed properties, failures often trace back to a few triggers. Poor installation is top of the list. If packers beneath the unit were not placed correctly, the weight transfers to the edge seal, which fatigues. On timber frames, neglected paint and failed external beads invite water, which undermines seals. Aggressive cleaning chemicals can degrade gaskets, especially older uPVC. Tenants who wedge windows open with objects can bend hinges slightly; the sash drags and the pressure on one corner escalates.

Another culprit is rapid temperature cycling. Kitchens and bathrooms see higher humidity and bigger swings. If trickle vents get taped closed during winter to stop drafts, moisture levels climb. That moisture wants to go somewhere. If it cannot leave through vents, it condenses on the coldest surface, often the glass. Over time, oscillating moisture levels stress seals. Your job is partly technical, partly behavioral: fit the right hardware, maintain it, and nudge tenants toward good habits.

Choosing when to repair, when to replace

Think in layers. If a window has a sound frame and hardware but a misted unit, swap the unit and refresh gaskets. If drafts persist, service or replace hinges and locking points. If the frame itself is warped, rotten, or cracked, consider a full window replacement. For uPVC over 20 years old, plasticizers may have migrated, leaving the surface chalky and brittle. These frames can accept new units, but you might be pouring money into a declining shell.

Look at the building as a system. Replacing a single unit in a block of thermally weak windows will help that room but may leave the overall EPC score unmoved. On the other hand, focusing on bedrooms and living rooms first tackles comfort where it matters most. Bathrooms usually benefit more from mechanical extraction upgrades than glass upgrades alone. If budgets are tight, triage by room use and complaint frequency.

Costs that make sense today

Prices vary by region, access, and glass spec. As a working range in the UK and much of Europe:

- Replacement sealed unit: £80 to £150 for typical sizes, £150 to £300 for large panes or odd shapes. Low-E coatings and laminated safety glass add 10 to 30 percent.
- Hinge and handle set: £25 to £60 per sash, plus one hour of labor.
- Resealing frame-to-masonry joints: £60 to £120 per opening, depends on old sealant removal and masking.
- Full window replacement: £450 to £900 for uPVC casements, £900 to £1,800 for timber or aluminium. Scaffolding, if needed above second floor, can add £300 to £1,200.

In flats without direct exterior access, factor in internal protection for carpets and furniture, and book slots when tenants are present or keys are available. I budget incidental protection and cleanup at £20 to £40 per opening, which sounds fussy until a spilled bead of old mastic stains a carpet and costs a full replacement.

The landlord's playbook for Misted Double Glazing Repairs

Within a rental context, you want speed, minimal disruption, and predictable spend. A practical sequence looks like this: visual assessment with photos; measure and order the replacement unit; schedule installation in a single visit; and document the outcome with before-and-after images. Send tenants a short note explaining what was done and how to use vents and handles. It takes coordination, not magic.

Some contractors will try to upsell full replacements immediately. Challenge that. Ask for a quotes split: sealed unit only, hardware service, and full frame replacement. If the frame has no structural or rot issues, I nearly always start with a unit swap. The exception is where coastal exposure or heavy traffic noise suggests a jump in spec to acoustic laminated glass, which can justify a new system with better seals.

Tenant communication that actually works

Window issues irritate tenants more than you might expect, because they sit between privacy and comfort. Clouded glass makes a home feel neglected. Drafts disrupt sleep. A short message goes a long way: we have logged the issue, here is the plan, here is the timeline. Tenants often worry that workmen will leave mess or need multiple visits. Reassure them it is usually a single appointment of about 45 to 90 minutes per opening, and explain that a replacement unit must be measured and ordered first. Give a window of dates rather than a single day until the glass is in hand.

If tenants taped vents or blocked trickle slots, avoid blame. Frame it as a moisture management conversation. Explain that vents address condensation and help avoid mold around windows and wardrobes. Offer to show the lock-off positions on handles for secure night ventilation.

Compliance and safety details that get missed

For ground-floor or easily accessible windows, confirm laminated safety glass in critical locations such as next to doors or within 800 mm of floor level, depending on local building regulations. Older installs sometimes used toughened glass but not laminated, which behaves differently if broken. In bathrooms, toughened safety glass is non-negotiable. When replacing a unit, match the safety spec indicated by the stamp on the existing glass or the requirements of current regs. Don't guess.

Ventilation requirements have tightened over the years. When swapping sealed units, you are not altering the frame, so trickle vent rules may not trigger. With full replacements, you will need compliant vents unless alternative ventilation is demonstrated. In noise-sensitive areas, consider acoustic trickle vents. They cost more but maintain airflow while dampening street sound.

Fire egress is another area to double-check. Bedrooms that rely on a specific window for escape must maintain clear opening sizes. If you are replacing frames, keep the hinge type and opening width appropriate.



Contractor selection and the measurement trap

Most headaches happen at the measurement stage. A sealed unit measured incorrectly by two millimeters will not sit correctly. Too small, and packers overcompensate and stress the edge seal. Too big, and it will not go in without forcing. Ask the contractor to measure visible glass size and frame rebates, and to confirm spacer thickness to match sightlines. If you have several identical windows, do not assume units are interchangeable. Buildings seldom keep perfect tolerances.

FENSA or equivalent certification is helpful for full replacements, but for sealed unit swaps and hardware repairs, the key is a glazier who does this daily. Ask for photos of recent work on similar frames. I prefer firms that fabricate their own units or have a tight relationship with a local glass supplier. Lead times drop from three weeks to five to seven days in many markets when suppliers are close and specification is standard.

Maintenance that actually extends life

Double glazing does not like neglect. An annual service visit, aligned with a gas safety check or boiler service, can include hinge lubrication, handle tightening, and gasket inspection. For uPVC, a wipe with a mild detergent keeps seals flexible. Avoid solvent-heavy cleaners. On timber, paint cycles of five to seven years matter. Tiny cracks along glazing beads let water in and rot out. On aluminium, keep drainage weep holes clear. Tenants rarely notice those, but you see the signs in damp frames and slow drying after rain.

Internal moisture control matters as much as hardware. Bathrooms need working extractor fans that run on a timer, ideally 10 to 20 minutes after the light goes off. Kitchens benefit from cooker hoods vented outside. If you cannot vent outside, you will fight condensation forever, no matter how good the glass is. Dehumidifiers help in the short term during winter lets, especially in older properties with solid walls, but they are a plaster on the wound, not a cure.

Energy performance and when to upgrade spec

Swapping a failed unit is a good moment to improve the glass spec. Low-E coatings and warm-edge spacer bars sharpen performance without changing the frame. Going from an older 24 mm cavity with basic spacer to a modern 28 mm with argon fill and a soft-coat Low-E can shave a few percent off heat loss in that room. The change is tangible near the sofa or bed adjacent to the window. Acoustic laminated glass helps in busy streets,

softening high-frequency noise like scooters and sirens. It adds weight, so hinges should be checked and upgraded if necessary.

Across an entire flat, moving to high-performance units can nudge EPC ratings up a band, which influences tenancy demand and mortgage terms. I would not chase a theoretical rating lift with glass alone, but if you are touching windows anyway, choose a spec that puts you on the right side of the curve for the next decade.

Insurance, warranties, and paperwork

Policies rarely cover wear and tear, which is where most seal failures sit. Storm damage is a different story. After severe weather, take photos of any cracked panes or twisted sashes before moving anything. For warranties, many double glazing companies offer 5 to 10 years on sealed units. Warranties transfer imperfectly between owners and can be voided by unapproved repairs. Keep invoices, unit stamps, and any certificates together. A simple folder with dates and locations makes unit matching easier next time a pane fails.

For leaseholds, check the lease before altering external appearances. Some freeholders require approvals even for like-for-like replacements. The delay can be frustrating, so have your managing agent looped in early.

A practical landlord routine that saves money

Here is a short, workable rhythm that has saved me grief across several portfolios:

- During each mid-term inspection, photograph every window in daylight, curtains open, from three angles. Note any drafts, sticking handles, or condensation between panes.
- If you spot a misted pane, measure and order the replacement immediately. Do not wait for the end of winter. Moisture trapped inside keeps eating at the seals.
- Combine window work with other trade visits when possible. A glazier can handle two to four units in a morning if parking and access are sorted.
- Keep a small stock of generic window gaskets and a silicone spray in your maintenance kit. Minor squeaks and perished seals around the opener get fixed on the spot, which impresses tenants.
- Send an annual reminder to tenants about vent use and bathroom fans, framed as comfort and mold prevention, not rules.

Edge cases landlords should plan for

Listed buildings and conservation areas complicate everything. You may be restricted to secondary glazing instead of double glazing. In those cases, treat the original sash with respect, and use high-quality, magnetic or track-based secondary systems that tenants can open for cleaning. The thermal benefit is real, and condensation behavior changes for the better if you maintain airflow to the primary glass.

Very large panes in modern flats present handling challenges. Lifts may be too small, and stairwells awkward. Book additional manpower for carry-ins, and check access routes. If the unit is over 30 kg, confirm safe lifting methods and whether a suction lift is required. Any hint of cracked glass at height raises safety risks, so do not rely on tenants to keep windows closed until your visit. Prioritize promptly.

Short-term rentals see heavier wear from frequent window use and cleaning. Put sturdier handles and restrictors in, and leave a laminated card explaining how to set the handle to the ventilated but locked position. It prevents accidental damage from forcing.

Where the money is made or lost

In rentals, time is money. The margin is set by how quickly you turn assessments into completed repairs without return visits. Measure once, fit once. Pick suppliers that confirm specifications in writing and note glass stamps. Bundle work across units so you are not paying multiple call-out fees. Keep tenants informed to prevent access failures that waste everyone's time. Finally, look at winter as your stress test. If a window survives December to February without complaints of drafts or fogging, your maintenance plan is working.

I have rarely regretted replacing a blown sealed unit quickly. I have frequently regretted leaving one to wait out a tenancy, only to find swollen frames, peeling paint, and mold chasing along the reveals. That costs three times as much and annoys tenants who then leave with a story to tell. In a competitive rental market, quiet comfort and clear glass is not a luxury. It is part of the promise you make when you hand over the keys.

Quick clarity on common questions

Landlords ask me the same handful of questions when they first encounter fogged windows. Here are the answers I give, stripped of fluff.

- Do I need to replace the whole window? Usually not. If the frame and hardware are sound, a sealed unit swap is enough.
- How long does a replacement take? Measuring is quick, ordering takes about a week, and fitting is often under an hour per opening.
- Can drilling the glass fix it? It can reduce mist visually for a while, but it does not restore insulation. For rentals, it is rarely worth it.
- Will this lift my EPC? Incrementally, yes, especially if you move to Low-E and argon-filled units, but combine with draft sealing and ventilation improvements for real gains.
- What about guarantees? Expect 5 to 10 years on new sealed units from reputable suppliers. Keep the paperwork and photos.

Double glazing is not a glamorous line item in your budget. It is, however, one of the few that touches comfort, efficiency, and tenant satisfaction all at once. Treat it as an asset to maintain with the same discipline you give to boilers and roofs. When problems surface, act decisively and document the work. Over a few winters, you will see fewer emails about damp and drafts, and your maintenance ledger will thank you.