Why Double Glazing Gets Misty Between the Panes and What to Do About It

What causes mist between double glazing panes?

Double glazing works by trapping a layer of gas or dry air between two panes of glass. This insulating layer is what keeps your home warm in winter and cooler in summer. When you see mist or condensation forming inside that gap, it means the seal that holds that gas in place has failed. The airtight barrier around the edge of the insulating glass unit has broken, letting moisture in and the insulating gas out.

Once moisture is inside the sealed unit, it will condense on the cool inner surfaces whenever the outside temperature drops. The result is a foggy or water-streaked window that cannot be cleaned from the outside or inside. Over time the misting can worsen, and in severe cases water may pool at the bottom of the pane.

How the seal fails

A double glazing unit is held together by a perimeter seal, usually made from a combination of silicone, polyisobutylene, and a spacer bar filled with desiccant. The desiccant is meant to absorb any trace moisture that gets in during manufacture. But over years of sun, rain, and temperature changes, the seal can degrade. Common causes include:

- Age: seals on older windows simply wear out after 10 to 20 years.
- Poor installation: if the unit is not fitted squarely or the frame puts pressure on the glass, the seal can break early.
- Damage to the frame: a knock or impact that shifts the window frame can crack the seal without breaking the glass.
- Manufacturing defect: occasionally the seal is not applied evenly from the start.

Once the seal is compromised, the desiccant eventually becomes saturated and can no longer absorb incoming moisture. At that point the unit is effectively finished as an insulator, and the mist you see is the proof.

Is misted double glazing still doing its job?

No. A sealed unit that has lost its insulating gas and now holds moist air inside has very little thermal performance left. You may notice a cold patch on the glass, a draught near the window, or higher heating bills in winter. The mist itself is also a sign that the window is no

longer airtight. In some cases the broken seal can let in a small amount of outdoor air, which makes the room feel draughty even when the window is closed.



There is also a practical issue: misted glass looks unsightly and can reduce the amount of natural light entering the room. If the window is in a living area or a room you use daily, the foggy appearance can be frustrating. And if the moisture inside the unit freezes in cold weather, the ice can cause the glass to crack.

Can you repair a misted double glazing unit?

In most cases, no. Once the seal has failed and moisture has entered the cavity, there is no way to dry out the space and reseal it effectively. Some companies offer a process that drills a small hole, drains the moisture, and installs a vent, but this is rarely a permanent solution. The unit will often mist again because the original seal is still compromised. For a long-term fix, the sealed unit needs to be replaced.

That said, if the window itself is in good condition and the frame is sound, you do not have to replace the whole window. Only the glass unit needs to come out. A glazier can measure the existing unit, order a new one to match, and install it. This is much cheaper than fitting a brand-new window and frame, and it keeps the original look of your home.

What about the frame and hardware?

While you are dealing with a misted window, it is a sensible moment to check the rest of the window's hardware. The locking mechanism, hinges, and handles take a lot of daily use, and a failing seal can sometimes be the least of your worries. A sticking window handle or a hinge that has dropped can put uneven pressure on the glass unit, which over time can contribute to seal failure. If the window does not close properly, it may also let in draughts and moisture around the frame.

If you notice that the window feels loose or the handle does not turn smoothly, a professional window lock repair can restore both security and smooth operation. A well-adjusted lock and hinge system takes the weight off the glass unit and helps the new seal last longer. Many homeowners find that addressing a minor window lock repair at the same time as the glass replacement saves them a second callout and keeps the window working as a whole system.

Is temporary boarding an option?

If the misted window is in a location where security is a concern, or if the glass has cracked as well as misted, temporary boarding can cover the opening until the new unit arrives. Plywood or a plastic sheet can be fitted from the inside, but this is only a short-term measure. Boarding does not insulate, and it blocks natural light. A better plan is to order the replacement unit as soon as you notice the misting, so the window is out of action for the shortest possible time.





For ground-floor windows, a boarded opening can also be a security risk if it is not fastened properly. If you need to board a window overnight, make sure the fixings are secure and that the board cannot be pried off from the outside. A glazing professional can advise on the best way to secure the opening while you wait.

How glass replacement works in practice

When you call a glazier for a misted double glazing unit, they will typically do the following:

1. Measure the existing unit precisely, including the thickness of the glass and the width of the spacer bar.
2. Order a new sealed unit from a glass supplier. This usually takes a few days to a week.
3. Remove the old unit by taking off the beading or frame strips that hold it in place.
4. Clean the frame and check for any damage or rot. If the frame is wooden, the glazier may treat the timber before fitting the new unit.
5. Install the new unit, apply fresh sealant around the edge, and refit the beading.

The whole process on site often takes less than an hour once the new unit has arrived. The result is a clear, energy-efficient window that will last for many years if maintained properly.

Choosing the right replacement glass

When you replace a misted unit, you have a chance to upgrade. Modern double glazing is more efficient than units made even ten years ago. You can choose low-emissivity (low-E) glass, which reflects heat back into the room, or toughened glass for extra strength in ground-floor or door-side windows. If your home is in a noisy area, you can also opt for acoustic laminated glass, which reduces sound transmission. The glazier can advise on what is suitable for your window frame and your budget.

Keep in mind that the new unit must match the original thickness and spacer width so that it fits the existing frame and beading. A professional measurement is essential: guessing the

size can lead to a unit that is too loose or too tight, both of which cause problems.

Preventing misting in new units

Once you have a fresh sealed unit, you can help it stay clear by keeping the window frame in good condition. Paint or varnish wooden frames regularly to stop moisture from soaking into the timber. Check the perimeter sealant around the edge of the glass each year for cracks or gaps. And make sure the window opens and closes freely: if it binds or sticks, the extra force can eventually stress the seal.



Good ventilation in the room also helps. Condensation on the inside of the glass is normal in humid rooms like kitchens and bathrooms, but if you keep the room aired out, that moisture is less likely to find its way into the frame or the seal over time.

When to call a professional

Misted double glazing is not a DIY fix. Attempting to drill into the unit or pry open the seal can break the glass or damage the frame, and it will not solve the problem. A qualified glazier has the tools and experience to remove the old unit safely and fit the new one without putting stress on the surrounding frame. If you also need attention to the window hardware, a

locksmith who handles glazing can often take care of both the glass replacement and any adjustment to the hinges or lock. That way, one visit covers the whole window.

For homes within 25 miles of Cannock, Arriva Locksmiths offers both emergency glazing and scheduled glass replacement. Their teams can measure, order, and install new sealed units, and they also handle window lock repair and hinge adjustments. If you are dealing with a misted window, a single call can get the glass and the hardware sorted at the same time.