

Window and Glazing Care Guide

A clear and simple guide to caring for your glazing

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Windows & Glazing

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Windows require regular cleaning and maintenance as per the manufacturer's instructions and guidelines.

By following the proper care and maintenance advice, you'll be able to maximise the lifespan and performance of your windows as well as ensure that the warranty stays intact.

According to Double Glazing on the Web, the cost of a single uPVC window, measuring 60 by 90cm, starts at £250.

Timber or aluminium windows cost a lot more, as do larger windows or those with more specialised designs. For example, replacing a sash window costs upwards of twice as much as replacing a casement window, regardless of the materials used.

Given that the costs of replacing windows in a typical family home can easily run into several thousand pounds, it is imperative you take extra care to follow the appropriate cleaning and maintenance instructions.

Although all manufacturers have their own guidelines, some general rules apply, depending largely on the materials from which the windows are made.

1. Caring for your window glazing

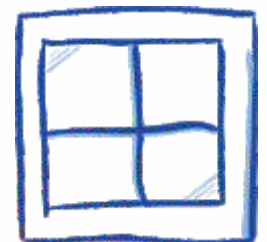
A regular cleaning schedule is important to keep your glazing looking its best, but it can also help to maximize the performance of your windows.

Most manufacturers recommend that you give your windows a thorough clean at least once per year in normal conditions.

However, if you live on the coast or in any other conditions where windows are more likely to get covered in debris (such as salt water) on a regular basis, it might be necessary to clean them once a month or two for optimal performance and appearance.

General Cleaning

General cleaning is usually straightforward enough, particularly if your windows feature self-cleaning glass, which usually does a pretty good job of keeping itself free of dirt under normal



weather conditions. However, it is important to remember that self-cleaning glass usually takes about a month to 'activate' after installation.

With windows featuring standard glass, occasional cleaning with washing-up liquid and water is necessary.

Be sure to avoid using a high-pressure hose, however, since this may cause damage to the sealant between the glazing the frames.

After cleaning the surfaces thoroughly with soap and water, rinse thoroughly and wipe down with a clean, dry cloth.

Stain Removal

Sometimes, general cleaning might not be enough to get rid of any stubborn stains, in which case you may need a specialised glass cleaning product.

Some stains may need a higher-strength cleaning solution, such as those containing xylene, mineral spirits or toluene. However, if you have self-cleaning windows, you should avoid any abrasive glass cleaners, particularly those that aren't specifically designed to work with that type of glass.

Most importantly, you should always avoid using any hard objects on such windows, since they can destroy the self-cleaning surfaces.

Removing Paint

After having new windows installed, you should always leave any protective covering on them until after you've painted the surrounding area, and be extra careful when painting timber window frames.

If for whatever reason you've managed to get paint on the glass, there are a few ways you may be able to remove it, so long as you do so before it dries.



Water-based emulsions, such as those usually used for walls and ceilings, can easily be wiped off with warm, soapy water.

To remove spirit-based paints, such as those usually used for painting wooden or metal surfaces, you'll need to use white spirit.

Removing Labels

New windows often come with manufacturer labels on the glass. Fortunately, most suppliers are thoughtful enough to make sure they're easy to remove, but there are always exceptions.

If hot water and soap don't work, another option is to use baking soda or rubbing alcohol.

Alternatively, you can try gently heating the surface using a hairdryer, which should melt the glue and make the label easier to remove using soap and water.



As always, just be sure to avoid using any abrasive chemicals or any specialised cleaning products not designed specifically for that purpose.

2. Window frame cleaning & maintenance

Proper care and maintenance for window frames is also very important, even though it tends to get overlooked.

Although dirt generally shouldn't damage your window frames, it is recommended that you clean them regularly to ensure that they always look their best.

For households in urban or coastal regions, a deep cleaning of the window frames four times per year tends to be optimal, although in inland rural regions, you can usually get away with cleaning them only a couple of times yearly.

uPVC Frames

uPVC windows require less cleaning and maintenance than wooden ones.

For the most part, you can use the same products and methods for cleaning uPVC window frames as you would to clean the glass.

Plenty of warm, soapy water will usually do the job, but you should avoid using glass cleaner on the frames, since it will likely be ineffective and could cause damage to the surfaces. For the same reason, you should also avoid using kitchen and bathroom cleaners.

Cleaning uPVC window frames is usually a straightforward process. However, any stubborn stains may require a specialised cream-based uPVC cleaner.

You should never use any other type of cleaning agent, particularly those that contain ammonia or any caustic substances. Likewise, to avoid permanent damage to the surfaces, you should always avoid scouring pads, steel wool or any other abrasive items.

Timber Frames

Many homeowners, particularly those living in newer properties, prefer uPVC windows due to the fact they need minimal cleaning and maintenance and are much cheaper to install.

What's good about timber frames?

- ✓ They can potentially last for decades
- ✓ They're more customisable and

- ✓ They have a timeless appearance about them that perfectly complements an older house

However, they also require some specialised care and maintenance to ensure maximum performance and longevity.

With timber-framed windows, the most important thing of all is timeliness when it comes to painting and protecting the surfaces after installation.

If untreated and newly installed timber frames end up being exposed to the weather, they can be irrevocably destroyed in short order. However, any responsible installer should be able to take care of this, unless you plan to paint the windows yourself.

! The main thing to remember with timber is that moisture is its number-one enemy.

For properly finished timber window frames, much the same rules apply for general cleaning as they do for uPVC windows. In most cases, warm, soapy water will be fine for cleaning all but the most stubborn of stains, in which case a new coat of paint might be necessary.

Most importantly, you should check regularly to ensure that your wooden windows are not subject to any standing water.

You should inspect timber windows once a year to determine whether they need to be refinished with a fresh coat of paint.

Before recoating any wooden surface, you'll need to ensure that it's thoroughly clean and gently sanded back for a smooth surface before applying a primer (on bare wood only), undercoat and, finally, a coat of gloss.

Just make sure that the weather conditions are likely to be ideal for at least the next 48 hours, since spirit-based paints can take a long time to dry.

Another important thing to remember about timber frames is that any scratches or chips need to be dealt with as soon as possible to prevent water from getting inside and causing rot.



Any damaged wooden surfaces should be properly prepared using the same methods you would when preparing for recoating.

Many manufacturers will not honour a product guarantee if you fail to treat scratches and chips appropriately.

3. Maintenance of parts

Under normal conditions, uPVC windows shouldn't need any additional care when it comes to parts such as locks and hinges unless, of course, they are broken, in which case you'll need to contact the manufacturer for further advice or enlist the help of a professional tradesman.

Note that, unlike metal components, plastic components do not require any lubrication.

Metal components, such as hinges, do occasionally need lubricating, particularly if they start squeaking. Light machine oil is ideal for this task, but you should avoid using any other oil or grease.

You'll normally need to do this once every year in the case of timber or aluminium windows.



While checking wooden windows, make sure that all screws are tight and that none are corroded. If any screws are corroded, then they should be replaced, otherwise you may never be able to remove the locks or hinges without causing severe damage to the frames.

4. Dealing with condensation

Contrary to popular belief, window condensation doesn't only affect old homes with old windows but, whatever the reason, it can point to a more severe problem that should be dealt with promptly.



According to AXA (<http://www.axa.co.uk/help-and-advice/my-home/what-causes-condensation-and-how-to-stop-it/>), one in five British homes are afflicted by condensation-related problems during the wet winter months, and about 70% of damp problems are directly due to condensation.

Condensation typically occurs during winter when homes tend to be closed up around the clock.

In most cases, however, the situation is usually a temporary one caused by cold outside air on the external faces of the windows and warm air on the inside.

This causes humidity to build up on the interior side of the window or, sometimes in the case of double glazing, between the window panes.

In most cases, dealing with condensation is entirely down to climate control and improving ventilation.

Newer windows, whether they feature uPVC or timber frames, tend to provide small ventilation shutters, which should always be left open during the winter to promote optimal airflow.

Excessive condensation in wooden windows should be dealt with immediately to prevent moisture penetrating the surfaces and causing rot and mould.

The first step simply involves wiping away the water droplets from the glass and frames, but it's just as important to take every necessary step to prevent it from returning.

Fortunately, prevention is usually straightforward:

- Bathrooms and kitchens should always be well-ventilated. Depending on various criteria, bathrooms are required by UK building regulations to have fitted, working extractor fans, particularly if there are no windows in the room.
- Kitchens should have adequate extractor fans installed to prevent excess steam escaping into the room and the rest of the house when cooking. It can also help to keep lids on saucepans.
- When cooking, showering or doing anything else that increases ambient humidity, it's always preferable to keep a window open if possible, even if you do have a good extractor fan.
- When hanging up laundry to dry inside the house, always make sure that the room is as well-ventilated as possible. This is not just to dry the clothes quicker, but also to decrease the humidity caused by evaporating water.

Today, most UK homeowners have double glazing.

When condensation builds up on the internal faces of a double-glazed window, dealing with the problem requires the same approach as with any other window. However, if the moisture is building up between the panes, matters get rather more complicated and, consequently, more expensive to fix. In almost all cases, anything getting into the air cavity between the panes points to a failed seal.

In the case of uPVC windows, fixing condensation between the panes is usually not possible, and you will need to completely replace the unit. In most cases, uPVC windows should be covered by a 10-year NHBC (National House Building Council) guarantee at minimum.

It is also wise to have additional protection by way of an insurance-backed guarantee, which will provide you with free replacements even in the event that the original installer is no longer in business.

Fortunately, uPVC windows don't tend to fail very often but, when they do, they usually need replacing entirely. By contrast, double-glazed, timber-framed windows can simply be reglazed which, while also expensive, is far cheaper and less complicated than replacing them entirely.

And finally

It will cost an average of £2,400 to replace uPVC casement windows in a typical terraced house with six windows, and almost double that for sash windows.

For timber-framed double-glazed windows, you can almost double the cost again although, with proper maintenance, they have a significantly longer lifespan than uPVC, with some lasting upwards of 60 years.

Whether you are replacing or repairing your windows, you should ensure that, given the substantial investment involved, you are suitably protected. Most suppliers offer a guarantee of at least 10 years, with some lasting as long as 20 years.

However, if you are getting your current windows replaced, it is very important that you ensure any guarantees are insurance-backed.

Given that there's always a chance of the original supplier going out of business during a period of that length, having an insurance-backed guarantee will mean that you're covered even if the company no longer exists.

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