

If you're starting out in trading or looking to expand your portfolio with both forex and stocks plus ETFs, choosing the right **CFD broker UK** that matches your needs can be tricky. You want a platform that offers a good range of markets, reliable regulation, fair fees, and tools to practice trading safely before committing real money. In this post, we'll compare three well-known brokers: **TIOmarkets (TIO Markets UK Ltd)**, **Plus500 (Plus500UK Ltd)**, and **IG Group**. We'll also explain key aspects like FCA regulation, FSCS protection, minimum deposits, and the benefit of demo accounts.



1. Why FCA Regulation and Safety Basics Matter

One of the first things to check when choosing a broker is if they are regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA). The FCA is the UK's financial watchdog that sets strict standards to protect retail traders. When a broker is FCA regulated, it means:

- The broker has to follow transparency rules regarding fees and execution.
- Client money must be held in segregated accounts separate from the company's operational funds.
- They must maintain robust financial resources and conduct regular audits.
- Protection against fraud and malpractice is enforced.

All three brokers in our review – TIOmarkets, Plus500, and IG Group – have FCA regulation and you can verify their presence on the FCA register with these Financial Registration Numbers (FRN):

Broker Legal Entity FCA Registration Number (FRN) TIOmarkets TIO Markets UK Ltd 709082 Plus500 Plus500UK Ltd 509909 IG Group IG Markets Ltd 114059

What FCA regulation does NOT cover

You must note FCA regulation itself does not protect your profits or guarantee that trading will be successful. Trading CFDs is risky and can result in losses exceeding your deposit unless you use risk management tools. FCA rules do require brokers to provide risk warnings and execute orders fairly, but the inherent market risk remains.

2. FSCS Compensation Scheme Explained

Another layer of protection for UK-based clients is the Financial Services Compensation Scheme (FSCS). This scheme covers client funds if a broker becomes insolvent or unable to return money. The FSCS will protect up to **£85,000 per person, per firm**.

- This means if your broker goes bust, you can claim your segregated funds up to that limit.
- However, FSCS does NOT cover losses incurred from trading itself, for example, if your positions go negative due to market volatility or leverage.
- Also, FSCS protection only applies to firms authorised by the FCA in the UK (which all three brokers do have).

3. Minimum Deposits and Starting Small

If you're testing waters or prefer low initial capital risk, minimum deposit requirements are important. Here's how the brokers stand:

Broker Minimum Deposit (£) Notes
TIOmarkets 100 Standard minimum, suitable for cautious starters
Plus500 100 Supports credit cards & PayPal; no deposit fees
IG Group 250 Higher initial deposit but with very broad market access

Starting small is wise, especially when exploring both forex and stocks/ETFs across CFD trading. This lets you learn the platform and markets without uncomfortable financial risk.

4. Demo Accounts and Practice Trading with MT5 and MT4

Before using real funds, demo accounts are invaluable. They allow you to trade virtual money live on market prices, learn the tools, try trading strategies, and get comfortable with order types without risking your capital.

- **TIOmarkets** supports both **MetaTrader 5 (MT5)** and **MetaTrader 4 (MT4)** platforms. These are industry-standard terminals with advanced charting, expert advisors, and extensive indicator libraries - great for forex traders and those wanting algorithmic trading.
- **Plus500** offers its own proprietary web and mobile platform with a built-in demo mode. While simpler, it's user-friendly and focused on straightforward trading, appealing to beginners.
- **IG Group** also uses MT4 alongside its proprietary platform. Their demo accounts provide access to all assets and tools, great for comprehensive learning.

Why MT4 and MT5 Matter

MetaTrader 4 and 5 are widely considered the gold standards in forex trading platforms. MT5 is the newer version with multi-asset support, including CFDs on stocks, ETFs, and commodities, while MT4 is still favored for forex due to its stability and expert advisor ecosystem. Brokers like TIOmarkets and IG offering these platforms lets you seamlessly trade forex alongside stocks and ETFs within one application.

5. Market Coverage: Forex, Stocks, and ETFs

A big factor in choosing a broker when looking to trade both forex and stocks/ETFs is the range and quality of CFD instruments on offer.

- **TIOmarkets** offers over 70 forex pairs plus thousands of CFDs on stocks and ETFs from major global exchanges, all tradable via MT4/MT5.

- **Plus500** covers 70+ forex pairs and 2,000+ CFDs on shares and ETFs, focusing on simplicity and accessibility.
- **IG Group** supports 90+ forex pairs and offers arguably one of the broadest selections of CFD stocks and ETFs on the market — 17,000+ instruments across global exchanges.

IG's extensive range can be a decisive factor for traders wanting access to niche ETFs or comprehensive stock coverage. If your portfolio strategy involves diversification across various global assets, IG might be the front-runner.

6. Spreads, Fees, and Transparency (Don't Just Trust "Tight Spreads")

Many brokers boast "tight spreads" but rarely show the exact numbers upfront on all account types. Here's a brief on what you can expect from these three:

- **TIOmarkets:** Typical forex spreads start around 1.0 pips on majors with commission-free accounts; however, you can opt for a raw ECN model with commissions but tighter spreads from 0.0 pips.
- **Plus500:** Uses spread-only pricing with no commissions. USD/EUR spread averages around 0.6 pips, but actual spreads vary widely with volatility.
- **IG Group:** Known for competitive spreads starting at 0.6 pips on major forex pairs with commission on shares CFDs (£8 per trade or volume-based fees). Transparent fee tables are available on their site.

Beyond spreads, watch for overnight funding charges and inactivity fees—Plus500 is known for zero inactivity fees until 3 months pass, while IG has a monthly inactivity fee after 2 years.

Summary: Which Broker Suits You Best?

Criteria	TIOmarkets	Plus500	IG Group	FCA Regulated & FSCS Coverage	Yes (FRN 709082)	Yes (FRN 509909)	Yes (FRN 114059)
Forex + Stocks + ETFs Availability	70+ forex, thousands of stocks/ETFs (via MT4/MT5)	70+ forex, 2,000+ stocks/ETFs CFDs	90+ forex, 17,000+ stocks/ETFs CFDs	Minimum Deposit	£100	£100	£250
Demo Account	Yes, MT4/MT5 demo accounts	Yes, proprietary platform demo	Yes, MT4 & proprietary demo	Trading Platforms	MT4, MT5	Proprietary Web/Mobile	MT4, Proprietary Web/Mobile
Spreads (Major Forex Pairs)	From 0.0 pips (ECN) / 1.0 pips standard	From 0.6 pips	From 0.6 pips				

Bonus: Popular Alternatives for UK Traders — eToro Review UK

Though not part of our main comparison, **eToro** is often searched along with "*CFD broker UK*" and deserves a mention. Regulated by the FCA (FRN 583263), eToro provides easy social trading, a unique copy trading feature, and straightforward demo accounts. However, it uses proprietary platforms with limited advanced tools and tends to have wider spreads on some forex pairs. Minimum deposits start from £200, so slightly higher than TIOmarkets or Plus500. It is a good option if you want a social trading experience combined with stocks <https://www.deeside.com/best-7-beginner-friendly-forex-brokers-uk-2026/> and ETFs but less classic MT4/MT5 use.



Final Thoughts

Choosing a CFD broker to trade forex plus stocks and ETFs depends on what matters most to you: platform preference, market range, initial deposit, or fee structure. In summary:

- **TIOmarkets** is ideal for those wanting professional MT4/MT5 platforms with ECN-like spread options and solid market variety starting low.
- **Plus500** suits beginners wanting a simple, no-commission model and quick access to a good range of instruments with an easy-to-use proprietary platform.
- **IG Group** is perfect for traders seeking the broadest market coverage in stocks and ETFs, combined with professional platforms, though with a higher deposit requirement.

Always open a demo account first, practise consistently, understand the risks, and verify FCA registration before funding. And as someone who's helped many traders onboard safely in the UK, I can't stress enough—avoid any broker without FCA regulation or FSCS protection.