

For UK beginners looking to start trading indices, picking the right broker is essential. You want a platform that's safe, regulated, and beginner-friendly — with transparent fees, reasonable minimum deposits, and good educational tools. Indices like the FTSE 100, S&P 500, or DAX offer a popular way to gain exposure to the stock market without buying individual stocks. But as a first-timer, navigating brokers can be confusing. Which ones are regulated by the FCA? Which support platforms like MetaTrader 4 (MT4) or MetaTrader 5 (MT5)? And do they offer demo accounts so you can practice without risking real cash?

In this guide, we'll break down three reputable CFD brokers available to UK clients — TIOmarkets (TIO Markets UK Ltd), Plus500 (Plus500UK Ltd), and IG Group — focusing on FCA regulation, client money protection via FSCS, minimum deposits, and demo account availability. We'll also share some practical tips on starting small and building your confidence as a new indices trader.

Understanding FCA Regulation and Safety Basics

The FCA (Financial Conduct Authority) regulates financial services firms in the UK, ensuring they follow strict rules to protect clients. When choosing a CFD broker in the UK, verifying they are on the FCA register is critical. You should look up their FCA Firm Reference Number (FRN) directly on the FCA register. The FCA requires brokers to segregate client funds, maintain minimum capital, and carry out regular audits, all designed to reduce your risk.

Here are the FCA details for the three brokers discussed:

Broker	Company Name	FCA Registration Number (FRN)
TIOmarkets	TIO Markets UK Ltd	832689
Plus500	Plus500UK Ltd	509909
IG	IG Group	114059

If your broker isn't FCA regulated, I recommend avoiding them completely. Unregulated brokers often lack sufficient client fund protection or may operate outside UK law.

FSCS Protection: What It Covers and What It Doesn't

Another key safety layer in the UK is the **Financial Services Compensation Scheme (FSCS)**. This protects clients in case a broker becomes insolvent. For CFD trading, FSCS covers up to £85,000 per eligible person per firm, which means if your broker goes bust, the scheme might refund your deposits up to that limit.

Important to note:

- FSCS protection **does not** cover trading losses caused by market movements.
- It is only valid for brokers authorised by the FCA or the Prudential Regulation Authority.
- The £85,000 cap is per broker, so if you have accounts with multiple FCA-regulated firms, the limit applies separately to each.

All three brokers covered here—TIOmarkets, Plus500, and IG—are FCA-authorised and hence eligible for FSCS protection. Confirm this on your broker's website or FCA register, as some brokers use sister companies in other jurisdictions to onboard clients.



Minimum Deposits and Starting Small

As a beginner, one of the most important things is to start small and manage risk carefully. Brokers vary widely on their minimum deposit requirements and account types, so let's look at how TIOmarkets, Plus500, and IG stand.

Broker Minimum Deposit Account Types Supporting Indices
TIOmarkets £100 Standard CFD account (MT4, MT5)
Plus500 £100 Single CFD trading account (Proprietary platform)
IG £250 CFD account, Share dealing account (Proprietary platform & L2 Dealer)

Notice how TIOmarkets and Plus500 allow deposits from £100, which is reasonable for beginners who want to test the waters. IG's minimum deposit is a bit higher, at £250, reflecting their larger, multi-segment platform.

Remember, "minimum deposit" doesn't mean you should instantly deposit that full amount if it stretches your budget. It's perfectly fine to start with less if your broker allows it or to fund your account incrementally. The key is never trading with money you can't afford to lose.

Demo Accounts and Practice Routines

One way to become confident trading indices is by using demo accounts. These are risk-free accounts funded with virtual money, allowing you to try trades, explore platforms, and test strategies without financial risk.

- **TIOmarkets** offers demo accounts on both MetaTrader 4 and MetaTrader 5. These platforms are industry standards known for their advanced charting tools, custom indicators, and automated trading capacity.
- **Plus500** provides a web-based demo that mirrors their proprietary platform, which is very user-friendly for beginners and includes easy access to index CFDs.
- **IG Group** has a demo account for their proprietary platform, as well as access to their advanced L2 Dealer platform, which is more suited to experienced traders but available to learners for practice too.

Using a demo account regularly builds muscle memory for order types, risk management settings like stop losses, and understanding market orders versus limit orders. As a beginner, aim to spend at least a few weeks trading your preferred indices in demo mode to refine your approach.

Platforms: MetaTrader 4, MetaTrader 5, and Proprietary Options

Platform choice is meaningful for your trading experience. MetaTrader 4 (MT4) and MetaTrader 5 (MT5) are the world's most popular third-party platforms, prized for their:

- Flexible charting and technical indicators
- Support for Expert Advisors (automated trading bots)
- Wide community and support

TIOmarkets supports both MT4 and MT5, making them an excellent choice for indices traders who want a flexible, professional-grade trading environment.

Meanwhile, **Plus500 and IG use proprietary platforms** designed to be beginner-friendly, with intuitive interfaces, integrated news feeds, and transparency on spreads and margin requirements directly visible on the trading screen. IG also offers extra platforms like the L2 Dealer for advanced traders.



Whichever platform you choose, confirm that it displays real-time data, lets you set stop-loss/take-profit orders easily, and offers price alerts. Those features are crucial basic tools for managing risk in indices trading.

How These Brokers Compare to CMC Markets

While we're focusing on TIOmarkets, Plus500, and IG, many beginners also ask about **CMC Markets**. CMC Markets is another FCA-regulated UK broker with a strong reputation for indices trading. Here's a brief comparison:

Feature	TIOmarkets	Plus500	IG	CMC Markets
FCA Regulated	Yes (FRN 832689)	Yes (FRN 509909)	Yes (FRN 114059)	Yes (FRN 173730)
Minimum Deposit	£100	£100	£250	£0 (No minimum deposit but requires verification)
Demo Account	Yes (MT4/MT5)	Yes (Proprietary)	Yes (Proprietary)	Yes (Proprietary)
Platform	MT4, MT5	Proprietary	Proprietary + L2 Dealer	Proprietary

The key takeaway here is CMC Markets has a very low barrier to entry in terms of deposits and excellent platform usability, but beginners who prefer standard MT4/MT5 environments might prefer TIOmarkets instead.

Summary: Which Broker Is Best for Beginner UK Indices Trading?

1. **TIOmarkets** is ideal for beginners who want FCA protection, demo accounts, and the flexibility of MT4/MT5 to grow into more advanced strategies.
2. **Plus500** offers a simple all-in-one approach with a user-friendly proprietary platform and straightforward minimum deposits—great for traders not ready to jump into complex technical analysis.
3. **IG Group** suits beginners who want a big brand name with varied account types and access to both beginner-friendly and advanced platforms—but with a slightly higher minimum deposit.

Whatever broker you pick:

- Always verify FCA regulation and FSCS protection.
- Use a demo account to practice trading indices before risking real money.
- Start with small deposits, only trading with what you can afford to lose.
- Learn basic risk management, like using stop-loss orders.

Indices trading can be a rewarding way [forex broker withdrawals visa mastercard](#) to start your journey in financial markets if done safely, with realistic expectations. By partnering with FCA-compliant brokers like TIOmarkets, Plus500, or IG and practicing regularly on demo accounts, you'll build skills and confidence step by step.

Further Reading and Reviews

- For detailed insights, see our [IG review UK](#) to understand their fees and platform in full detail.
- Compare Plus500 and CMC Markets alongside other CFD broker UK options to find your best fit.
- Explore MetaTrader platform tutorials online to unlock their full potential, especially if choosing TIOmarkets.