Think, pair, share

This is a useful exercise to use when students need help to recall events, make a summary, stimulate their own thinking or share responses, feelings and ideas.

First, students sit on their own for about 5-10 minutes, and think about the topic assigned or some aspect of it that the tutor has signalled as being important for the tutorial. They can be encouraged to make written notes while they are doing this.

Then they pair up with a neighbour for a further 5-10 minutes to share their own ideas with one another and discuss these, perhaps in light of a larger topic they have to do some work on. For example, the tutorial they are in may be building towards a big assignment or essay or project, and you need them to think about smaller parts of the big topic but relate them back to it. The tutor should be walking around, observing and stopping to check in and help out where it seems needed. To help the students establish effective speaking and listening skills, tutors can model and refer to behaviours that are expected when people speak and listen to each other. However, the students should be managing their own pair discussions.

Finally, some of the pairs can share their ideas and thoughts with the whole group. Ideally each pair should have a chance to speak and contribute, but this can be adjusted to take account of the time you have. The tutor’s role is to draw strands of the discussion together and help the group see how different ideas relate to one another, to encourage whole group discussion, and to relate the most important or useful ideas that come out to the overall topic or focus of the tutorial. This last step is important because students need to fully understand the point of the tutorial and how it relates to what they are doing in class and assignments, so that it is clear how tutorials are supporting and extending their learning.
Team, Pair Solo

This exercise is useful when you are working with new or difficult concepts.

Students do problems or tackle questions first as a team, then with a partner, and finally on their own. It is designed to motivate students to tackle and succeed at problems which initially are beyond their ability. It is based on a simple notion of mediated learning. Students can do more things with help (mediation) than they can do alone. By allowing them to work on problems they could not do alone, first as a team and then with a partner, they progress to a point they can do alone that which at first they could do only with help.
Think, talk, write

This is a useful exercise to use where it is important or necessary for the students to do some more formal writing.

The first step is to ask students to sit on their own and think about the topic assigned for the tutorial session, and make some notes about their ideas or questions they have or what they want to write about.

Then they should get into small groups of 3 or 4 (or pairs) and share their ideas in the small group, being encouraged to give each other feedback so that the process isn’t just about accepting the ideas that come out as is, but also about discussing and even debating them as necessary. The tutor should walk around and observe, listen in where he or she can, and offer advice and guidance, but not so as to overly disrupt or undermine the group dynamic and ownership of the discussion and ideas.

Finally, set a small writing task where students now have to take their own ideas and the ideas from the group sharing and write a concise piece of written work on a specific topic. They could be writing a whole tutorial task, if it is a short one, or part of an essay or longer project. This is a very useful way to make tutorials more writing intensive, and to do so in a more supported and interactive way.

If there is time, the tutor could ask a couple of students to read their written work out and give formative comments, which may be helpful for the whole group.

Another variation is to get the group to produce a piece of writing collaboratively, nominating a scribe to do the writing and a spokesperson to read it out to the whole tutorial group. Again this is very useful because the tutor then has time for small pieces of formative feedback which benefit all the students.
**Jigsaw puzzle**

This activity is characterised by participants within a cooperative group each becoming expert on different aspects of one topic of study.

1. Before presenting and teaching to the cooperative group, students form *Expert Groups*, comprised of individuals from different cooperative groups who have the same assigned topic.

2. Together, expert partners study their topic and plan effective ways to teach important information when they return to their cooperative groups.

3. One way of teaching is for the expert group to display their information on paper.

4. Participants return to their cooperative groups and then take their cooperative group on a Gallery Tour (walk around the room) to each display.

5. Or participants can return to their cooperative groups and teach all members of their group as they are now the experts.
Peer writing assistance

This is a useful exercise for getting students to engage with one another in giving formative feedback on writing, which helps both the feedback giver and the feedback receiver, and shares the load in terms of the tutor commenting on the students’ writing in the drafting stages. However, this has to be clearly supported and explained and works when there are clear assessment criteria for the writing task to refer to.

The idea is to get students into pairs or threes and have them swap a piece of work they are writing with one another. The assessment criteria for the piece of writing need to be discussed and clarified for the whole group. The students read one another’s work and give one another constructive feedback. The tutor should be walking around, listening in where necessary and offering advice and guidance. Students can gain a great deal from this kind of exercise in terms of reflecting on their own writing in terms of the feedback they are giving, helping a colleague by giving useful comments on a draft, and internalising the assessment criteria more thoughtfully.

To wrap up, get the students to talk about some of the broader issues that came out for them in the writing, their own and their partner’s, and try to give some guidance that may help the whole group if possible.