

Brachiopods: Easy to Find Fossils



Brachiopods are among the most common fossils in Indiana rocks. Found only in strata deposited 600–250 million years ago in the shallow seas that covered Indiana, they rather resemble clams but are a distinct phylum of marine animals. Brachiopods attached to

the sea floor in various ways. Some had a fleshy stalk, some anchored with spines, and others had a beak that pushed into soft mud or lay loose on the sea floor.

A distinct feature of brachiopods is their bilateral symmetry. Like humans, the right half of the shell is a mirror image of the left half. This bilateral symmetry of each valve is what differentiates brachiopods from other shelled bivalves, such as mollusks and clams, which have symmetry along the hinge line.

A few species still live in oceans today, usually in shallow water. Collectors prize fossil brachiopods because of their varied size and shape and excellent preservation.

