

Bivalves

These molluscs have shells, which are split in two halves, held together by a hinge. The bivalves are characterized by having a pair of plate-like gills on either side of the body, which serve for respiratory exchange but are also used for the feeding process.

Bivalves open slightly to allow the animal to filter small particles of food from the water. They remove plankton, mainly diatoms from the water. They are filter feeders. The food particles are trapped in a layer of mucus on the surface of the gills and then conveyed to the mouth by the beating action of cilia, which cover the gills. The particles are sorted by smaller gill-like structures called palps before entering the mouth. The shells close tightly when protection is required.

Some bivalves bury themselves in the mud while others attach to rocks.