Brachiopod Vs. Bivalve/clams
What’s the difference?

Even though these fossils seem the same the animal inside is very different. There are a few easy ways to tell the difference by looking at the shells.

Brachiopod

Clam

Same

Not Same

Split down the middle, the shell on the brachiopod is the same on each side and each half of the clam is different.

The top and bottom shell is different on the brachiopod and both of the clam’s shells are the same.

Drawings by Maureen Bickley
Brachiopods (pronounced Brak-ee-o-pods) were perhaps the most common fossil of the Devonian Period. There were many different kinds, living in many different places. Today very few kinds of brachiopods still exist. They live deep in the ocean.

“Lamp Shell”
Ambocoelia

Drawings by
Maureen Bickley
Clams are very common today. Many people find them while walking on the beach. But these shelled animals were not as common during the Devonian Period, around 380,000,000 years ago.

Bivalve top and bottom shells look the same.