Owing to their remarkable adaptability gastropod molluscs have not only invaded different environments but are living there successfully. The capability of a species to exploit the environment to the maximum not only determines its stability and survival but abundance also, as the phenomenon of multiplication is a self accelerating process. This in turn leads to the invasion of new territories, the appearance of new variations and finally evolution of new species. In the course of evolution, as is evidenced from the fossil record, gastropods have efficiently utilised varied ecological niches and this is more well marked in aquatic and semi-aquatic forms.

The prime needs of a species for survival and perpetuation of the race are food and safety. The utilisation of available food means not only efficient functioning of the different organs associated with nutrition but also modifications of organs in response to the handling of food. Change of environment is common for the animals, and this often implies change in the type of food available. The organs concerned must accordingly be modified for maximum utilisation of the food available.

The structures present in the oral region - the tentacles, labial palps, jaw and an odontophore with a radula - all are destined to play an important role in the procurement of food, either by simply collecting minute particles or by tearing or scraping vegetable matter or both, the efficient functioning depending on the degree of modification of the organs concerned in relation to feeding habits.
prosobranchs, either herbivore or ciliary feeder, are almost continuous feeders and have developed a gut with a complex musculature, still complex sorting areas and both extra and intracellular digestion in many species. In contrast to this due to the small bulk of food, intermittent feeding and wholly extracellular digestion in carnivores the stomach is reduced to a simple bag without a style sac and sorting area.

In the chiefly herbivorous pulmonates, the majority of the aquatic members browse on fine deposits with a broad, many toothed radula, while the land forms are faced with a prolific supply of plant food - leaves, shoots, berries, fruits, fungi and decaying vegetables. This has resulted in the radula forming a broad file with many thousands of small unspecialised teeth. The gizzard and sorting areas are unnecessary and the stomach is partly replaced by a long, thin walled crop.

The structure and physiology of the digestive organs in gastropods exhibit wide variations and a correlation exists between the food and feeding habits.