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## Listless over lists

By Steve Gillespie / managing editor

I like lists. I like reading them and I like making them. I don't always follow the ones I write, like the ones for grocery shopping, things to do, or goals. I don't always trust the ones I read, like the ones that say Mississippi is the worst state at everything good and the best state at everything bad.

The last such list I saw had Mississippi ranked as third among states whose citizens purchase online pornography.

Utah was number one, followed by Alaska among online pornography purchased per thousand home broadband users. The study, "Who Buys Online Adult Entertainment" was done by the Journal of Economic Perspectives.

It points out more conservative states that voted for John McCain for president were among the top online porn purchasers and fewer non-conservative states that voted for Barack Obama were on the most active list.

That's interesting, but it still doesn't tell us anything about the individuals buying all the online pornography does it? We don't know if they are conservative, liberal, or whether they have any political thoughts at all. But, lists like that are used to label everyone in Mississippi as a bunch of hypocrites for being in the Bible belt, conservative and having all that porn on everyone's computers.

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It's important to know what criteria is used to form lists. We took the list of Mississippi being the fattest state several years in a row seriously because two-thirds of our population were either overweight or obese by CDC standards.

You can find Mississippi ranked as the worst state to live in according to statemaster.com, but if you do some digging you'll see that's based on factors like how many roller coasters and malls are in each state.

The same group ranked Mississippi as the third dumbest state followed by Nevada and Arizona. Part of that listing is based on student test scores compared to the national average, but a lot of it is based on student-teacher ratios, school revenue, and teacher salaries. Poorer states don't have much of a chance at having a good showing based on that.

Mississippi comes in 36th based on its state and local tax burden according to www.taxfoundation.org. That's not too bad, but you don't see that blasted all over the national news.

My favorite lists are fun ones, the ones you don't have to think about like those Top Ten lists David Letterman gives us. You can check out those gems in the archives section at the Web site [lateshow.cbs.com/latenight/lateshow/](http://lateshow.cbs.com/latenight/lateshow/). Dave also has a weekly contest on the Web site anyone can participate in to supply him with a Top Ten joke. This week's topic is Top Ten Rejected NCAA College Basketball Mascots. If your joke is used in his Top Ten answers you win a Late Show t-shirt.

Another fun Web site for lists is [www.topfive.com](http://www.topfive.com). There are all kinds of hilarious lists that can be found there, like the Top 15 Worst Blues Singer Names. An example: Willie "White Shoes After Labor Day" Lumpkin.

Or, check out the Top 12 Rejected Cookbook Titles. Example: "Everything's Yogurt ... Eventually!"

But, for those who like to use your brain and even debate and argue, with yourself and others, or like getting mad over something you read, there's a Web site for you, too. Check out [www.procon.org](http://www.procon.org), where you can find lists of reasons to be for and against things like the death penalty, euthanasia, legalized prostitution, whether "under God" should be in the Pledge of Allegiance and more fun stuff like that.

Steve Gillespie is managing editor of The Meridian Star.

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