Four Styles of Dance in "America's Ballroom Challenge"

American Smooth (Hour 1 & Hour 3)
Picture Fred and Ginger gliding across the screen, sometimes together, sometimes apart, but always in perfect time. This is American Smooth. Adapted in America from the traditional standard dances of Europe, American Smooth includes four dances that are also performed in the International Standard: waltz, tango, foxtrot and Viennese waltz. While the Standard dancers must remain in contact throughout, American Smooth couples are allowed to separate, and even perform solo moves, before rejoining. This "open hold" gives them more creative freedom and leads to a distinctly different kind of expression than is seen in the International Standard style.

American Rhythm (Hour 1 & Hour 3)
The dances in the American Rhythm division consist of the cha cha, rumba, swing, bolero and mambo. With the exception of swing, which started in America, these sultry, sexy dances originated in Africa and Cuba. The essential ingredient is the suggestive hip rotation, referred to as "Cuban motion." This is the only division in which the mambo, bolero and swing are danced competitively.

International Standard (Hour 2 & Hour 3)
When one conjures an image of ballroom dancing, International Standard is the style that most often comes to mind: sweeping ballgowns, men in tails and formal, regal dancing. With steps that date back hundreds of years to the royal courts of Europe, it is ballroom's oldest style, its most recognizable and, some would say, its most elegant. The competition includes five dances: waltz, tango, Viennese waltz, foxtrot and quickstep. All five must be danced in the "closed position," meaning that the man and woman must remain in contact at all times — in contrast to their American Smooth counterparts, who are allowed to separate and rejoin while performing many of the same steps.

International Latin (Hour 2 & Hour 3)
Dancing doesn't get any hotter than International Latin. Dazzling footwork, provocative moves and skimpy costumes define this sizzling style. The couples perform five dances — cha cha, samba, rumba, paso doble and jive — each one in its own way reflecting the timeless dance of seduction between a man and a woman. The fiercely competitive Latin couples attract the judges' attention with flamboyant hair and makeup, dazzling accessories … and costumes that leave just enough to the imagination.

Pro-Am Exhibitions (Hour 1, Hour 2 & Hour 3)
Interspersed throughout the professional competition on *America's Ballroom Challenge* are six "Pro-Am" exhibitions – two per hour. Each Pro-Am couple is a pairing of a professional teacher with an amateur student. These Pro-Am couples work just as hard as the professionals, spending countless hours rehearsing. The security of having a professional partner helps students develop confidence and poise they need to perform in front of a large crowd and to be in the spotlight for a solo routine they've worked on for many months. For the truly devoted amateur, competing in Pro-Am is the best stepping stone to becoming a professional.

Cabaret (Hour 3)
Cabaret is the riskiest and most theatrical of all the dance styles, where the dancers defy the laws of physics with seemingly impossible lifts, spins and jumps. More than in any other division, the men in Cabaret must be strong, and the women must be light, agile and very flexible. Both partners must also have terrific stamina, because Cabaret dances run about three-and-a-half minutes – twice as long as a typical routine in the other styles. These dancers also need nerves of steel, because the moves can be quite dangerous. The best of these daredevils of the dance world craft routines with enough risk to keep the audience on the edge of their seats.

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